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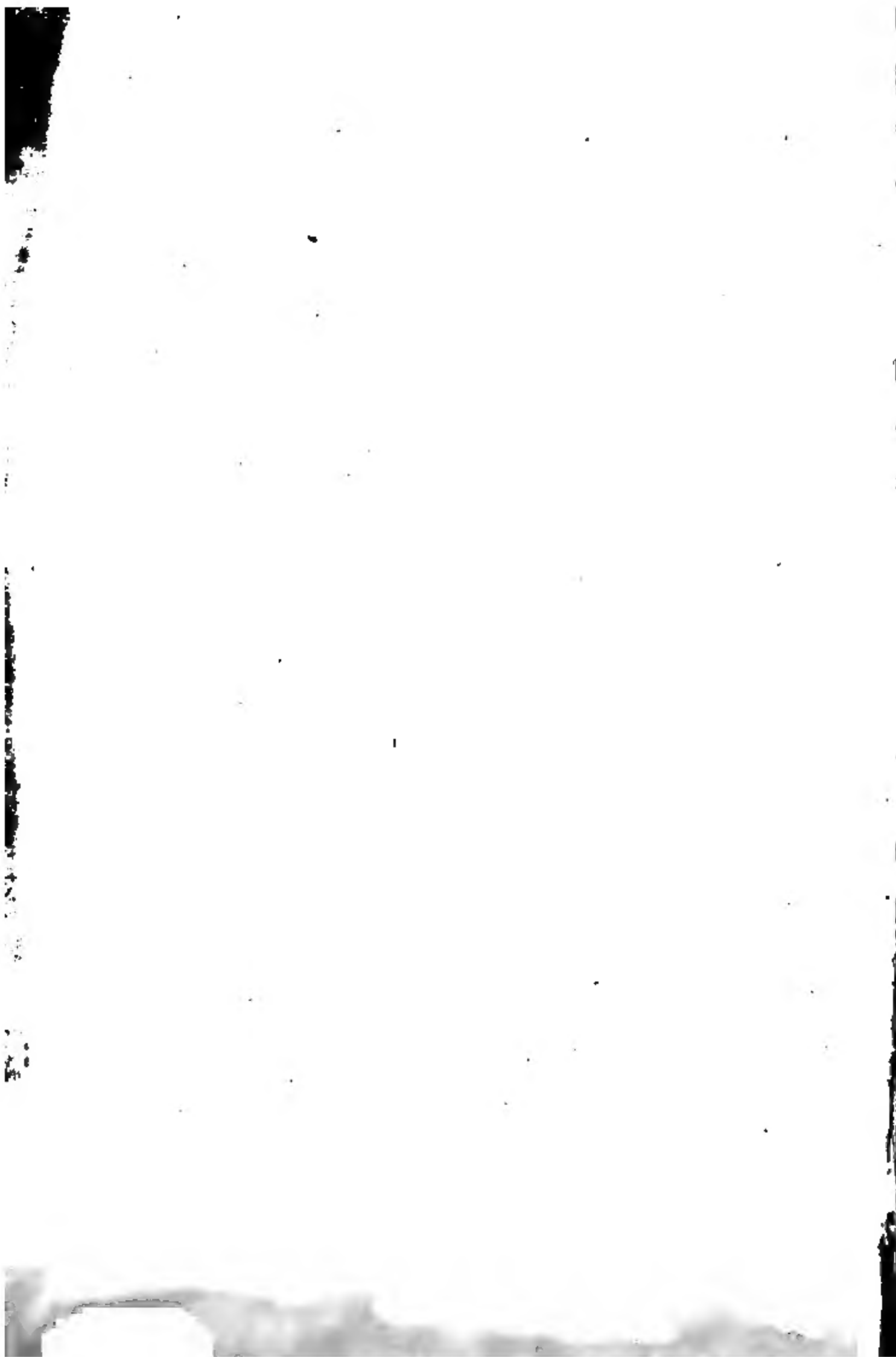
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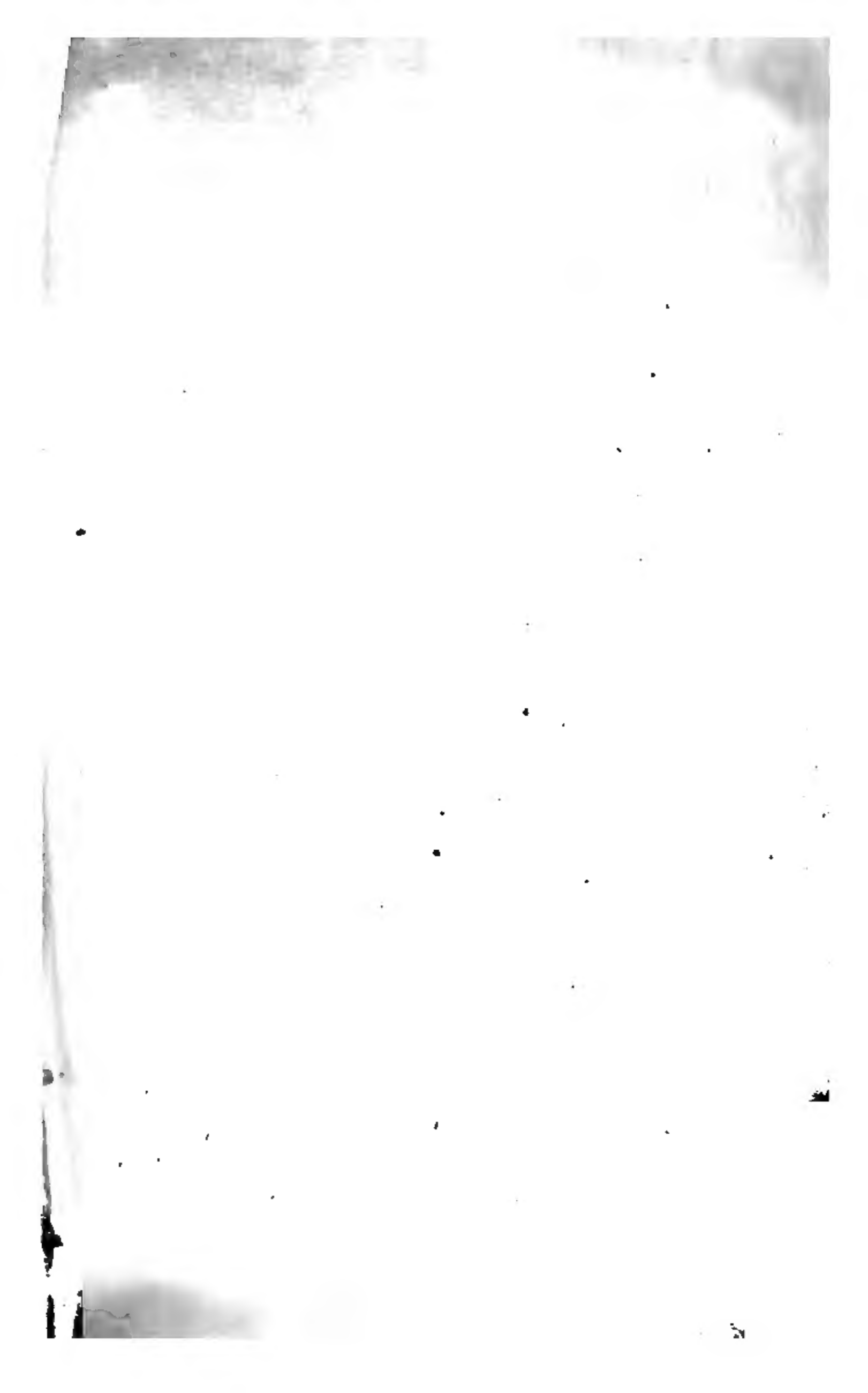
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# BODY OF DIVINITY:

WHEREIN THE

## DOCTRINES

OF THE

## CHRISTIAN RELIGION

ARE EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.

BEING THE

*SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL LECTURES*

ON

THE ASSEMBLY'S LARGER CATECHISM.

BY THOMAS RIDGLEY, D. D.

---

*WITH NOTES, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED,*

BY JAMES P. WILSON, D. D.

---

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

*VOL. IV.*

.....

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE THIRD EUROPEAN EDITION.

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THE  
**DOCTRINES**  
OF THE  
**CHRISTIAN RELIGION**  
EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.

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OF THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

QUEST. CXXXVII. *Which is the seventh Commandment?*

ANSW. The seventh Commandment is, [*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*]

QUEST. CXXXVIII. *What are the duties required in the seventh Commandment?*

ANSW. The duties required in the seventh Commandment, are, chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behaviour; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes, and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel, marriage by those that have not the gift of continency; conjugal love, and cohabitation, diligent labour in our callings, shunning all occasions of uncleanness, resisting temptations thereunto.

QUEST. CXXXIX. *What are the sins forbidden in the seventh Commandment?*

ANSW. The sins forbidden in the seventh Commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts, all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections, all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent, or light behaviour; immodest apparel; prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages, allowing, tolerating, keeping of stews, and resort-  
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ing to them; intangling vows of single life; undue delay of marriage, having more wives or husbands than one, at the same time; unjust divorce, or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company, lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage plays, and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or others.

**T**HIS Commandment respects, more especially, the government of the affections, and the keeping our minds and bodies in such an holy frame, that nothing impure, immodest, or contrary to the strictest chastity, may defile, or be a reproach to us, or insinuate itself into our conversation with one another. And, in order thereunto, we are to set a strict watch over our thoughts and actions, and avoid every thing that may be an occasion of this sin, and use those proper methods that may prevent all temptations to it. Therefore we ought to associate ourselves with none but those whose conversation is chaste, and such as becomes Christians, to abhor all words and actions that are not so much as to be named among persons professing godliness. As for those who cannot, without inconveniency, govern their affections, but are sometimes tempted to any thing that is inconsistent with that purity of heart and life, which all ought religiously to maintain, it is their duty to enter into a married state; which is an ordinance that God has appointed, to prevent the breach of this Commandment. And this leads us to consider the sins forbidden therein, together with the occasions thereof.

I. Concerning the sins forbidden in this Commandment. And,

1. Some are not only contrary to nature, but inconsistent with the least pretences to religion; which were abhorred by the very Heathen themselves, and, by the law of God, punished with death; which punishment, when it has not been inflicted, God has, by his immediate hand, testified his vengeance against sinners, by raining down fire and brimstone from heaven, as he did upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lev. xviii. 22,—25. chap. xx. 13, 15, 16. Rom. i. 24, 26, 27, 28. Gen. xix. 24. These sins are called in this answer, incest, sodomy, and unnatural lusts. To which we may add, offering violence to others, and thereby forcing them to do what they could not even think of, but with abhorrence; this is called rape; and, by the law of God, the guilty person was punished with death, Deut. xxii. 25.

2. There are other sins, whereby this Commandment is violated; which, though more common, are, nevertheless, such as are attended with a very great degree of guilt and impurity. These are either, such as are committed by those who are un-

married, viz. fornication, or by those who are married, as adultery; the latter of which, by the law of God, was punished with death, Lev. xx. 10. as contained in it several aggravating circumstances; inasmuch as hereby the marriage contract is violated; that mutual affection, which is the end of that relation broken; and thereby the greatest injury is done to the innocent as well as ruin brought on the guilty. However, both these sins agree in this, that they proceed from a corrupt heart; as our Saviour says, Mat. xv. 19. and argue the person that is guilty of them, alienated from the life of God. And to this we may add,

3. That, another sin forbidden in this Commandment is, polygamy, or a having more husbands, or wives, than one, at the same time; together with that which often accompanies it, viz. concubinage. It is beyond dispute, that many good men have been guilty of this sin, as appears by what is recorded, in scripture, concerning Abraham, Jacob, David, &c. and we do not find that they are expressly reprov'd for it, which has given occasion to some modern writers, to think that it was not unlawful in those ages, but was afterwards rendered so by being prohibited under the gospel-dispensation\*. This, indeed, cuts the knot of a very considerable difficulty; but it contains another that is equally great; inasmuch as hereby it does not appear to be contrary to the law of nature; and therefore I would rather chuse to take another method to solve it, viz. that many bad actions of good men are recorded in scripture, but not approved of, nor proposed for our imitation. Of this kind I must conclude the polygamy and concubinage of several holy men, mentioned in scripture, to have been. And that it may appear that this practice was not justifiable, let it be observed,

(1.) That, some sin or other is often expressly mentioned, as the occasion hereof. Thus Abraham's taking Hagar, was occasioned by Sarah's unbelief; because the promise of her having a son was not immediately fulfilled, Gen. xvi. 1, 2. And Jacob's taking Rachel to wife after Leah, and his own discontent arising from it, was occasioned by Laban's unjust dealing with him, and his going in unto Bilhah, was occasioned by Rachel's unreasonable desire of children; and his taking Zilpah, by Leah's ambitious desire of having pre-eminence over Rachel, by the number of her children, chap. xxix, and xxx.

(2.) This was generally attended with the breach of that peace, which is so desirable a blessing in families, and many disorders that ensued hereupon. Accordingly, we read of an

\* Vid. Grot. de jur. bell. & pacis, Lib ii. cap. v. § 9.

irreconcilable quarrel that there was between Sarah and Hagar ; and Ishmael's hatred of Isaac, which the apostle calls *persecution*, Gal. iv. 39. And to this we may add, the contentions that were in Jacob's family, and the envy expressed by the children of one of his wives, against those of another ; and the opposition which one wife often expressed to another as that of Peninnah, one of the wives of Elkanah, to Hannah, the other. Therefore we must conclude, that Isaac's example is rather to be followed in this matter, who had but one wife, and he loved her better than many of the patriarch's did theirs ; whose love was divided among several.

*Object. 1.* If polygamy was a sin against the light of nature, it is strange, that it should be committed by good men ; and, that they should live and die without repenting of it, nor be, in the least, reprov'd for it ; as we do not find that they were, in scripture.

*Ans.* It was indeed, a sin, which they might have known to be so, had they duly considered it, in all its circumstances and consequences ; but this they did not ; and therefore it was not so great a sin in them, as it would be in us, who have clearer discoveries of the heinous nature of it. Therefore, if we suppose they repented of all sin agreeably to the light they had, they might be saved ; and this, though unrepented of, was no bar to their salvation, supposing they knew it not to be a sin ; and God's not having explicitly reprov'd them for it, argues only his forbearance, but not his approbation of it.

*Object. 2.* It is farther objected, that God says, by Nathan, to David, *I gave thee thy master's wives into thy bosom*, 2 Sam. xii. 8. therefore, that which God gives, it is not unlawful for man to receive.

*Ans.* The meaning of that scripture in general, is, that God made him king ; and then, according to the custom of the eastern kings, he took possession of what belonged to his predecessor, and consequently of his wives. Therefore God might be said to give David Saul's wives providentially, in giving him the kingdom ; so that they were his property, that he might take them for his own, according to custom, if he was inclined so to do. And this the kings of Judah generally did ; though it does not follow from hence that God approved of it ; in like manner as tyrants may be said to be raised up by God's providence and permission ; nevertheless, he does not approve of their tyranny.

All that we shall add, under this head, to what has been suggested, concerning the disorders that polygamy has occasioned in families, is, that it is contrary to the first institution of marriage. God created but one woman as an help-meet for Adam ; though, if ever there were any pretence for the



necessity of one man's having more wives, it must have been in that instance, in which it seemed necessary for the increase of the world; but he rather chose that mankind should be propagated by slower advances, than to give the least dispensation, or indulgence to polygamy, as being contrary to the law of nature, Gen. ii. 22,—24. And the prophet, in Mal. ii. 15. takes notice of God's *making but one*; though he had *the residue of the Spirit*; and therefore could have given Adam more wives than one. And the reason assigned for this was, that *he might seek a godly seed*, i. e. that the children that should be born of many wives, might not be the result of the ungodly practice of their father, as it would be, were this contrary to the law of nature; which we suppose it to be. This I rather understand by *a godly seed*, and not that the character of *godly* refers to the children; for these could not be said to be godly, or ungodly, as the consequence of their parents having one or more wives.

There is one scripture more that I cannot wholly pass over, which, to me, seems a plain prohibition of polygamy, in Levit. xviii. 18. *Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her life-time.* This respects either incest or polygamy; one of which must be meant by *taking a wife to her sister*. Now it cannot be a prohibition of incest; because it is said, *Thou shalt not do it in her life-time*; which plainly intimates, that it might be done after her death. Whereas it is certainly contrary to the law of God and nature, for a person to take his wife's sister after her decease, as well as in her life-time. Therefore the meaning is, *Thou shalt not take another wife to her whom thou hast married*; by which means they will become sisters. And here is another reason assigned hereof, *viz. the envy, jealousy, and vexation that would attend such a practice, as the taking another wife would be a means of vexing, or making her uneasy.* And therefore the sense is, as is observed in the marginal reading; *Thou shalt not take one wife to another*; or, *Thou shalt not have more wives than one.* This is a plain prohibition of this sin; but whether some holy men, in following ages, understood the meaning of this law, may be questioned; and therefore they were not sensible of the guilt they hereby contracted. Thus we have considered some of the sins forbidden in this Commandment. Every particular instance of the breach hereof, would exceed our intended brevity, on the subject we are treating of. Therefore,

We shall proceed to consider the aggravations, more especially, of the sins of fornication and adultery; which may also with just reason, be applied to all other unnatural lusts; which

have been before considered as a breach of this Commandment. And,

[1.] They are opposite to sanctification, even as darkness is to light, hell to heaven; thus the apostle opposes fornication and uncleanness, to it, 1 Thes. iv. 3, 7.

[2.] These sins are inconsistent with that relation, we pretend to stand in, to Christ, as members of his body; inasmuch as we join ourselves in a confederacy with his profligate enemies, 1 Cor. vi. 15, 16. And to this we may add, that they are a dishonour to, and a defilement of our own bodies, which ought to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, and therefore should be consecrated to him.

[3.] They bring guilt and ruin on two persons at once, as well as a blot and stain on each of their families, and a wound to religion by those who make any profession of it, as it gives *occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, Prov. vi. 33. 2 Sam. xii. 14.

[4.] They bring with them many other sins; as they tend to vitiate the affections, deprave the mind, defile the conscience, and provoke God to give persons up to spiritual judgments, which will end in their running into all excess of riot.

And to this we may add, that many sad consequences will ensue on the commission of these sins; as they tend to blast and ruin their substance in the world, Job xxxi. 9, 11, 12. debase and stupify the soul, and deprive it of wisdom, Hos. iv. 11. Prov. vi. 32. chap. vii. 22. wound the conscience, and expose the person who is guilty hereof, to the utmost hazard of perishing for ever, chap. vi. 33. chap. vii. 13, 19, 26, 27. And if God is pleased to give him repentance, it will be attended with great bitterness, Eccl. vii. 26.

II. We are now to consider the occasion of these sins to be avoided by those who would not break this Commandment; and these are,

1. Intemperance, or excess in eating or drinking; the former of which is a making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; the latter confounds and buries the little reason a person was master of, and makes him an easy prey to temptation. This was Lot's case; who kept his integrity in Sodom; yet being made drunk by his daughters in Zoar, he committed the abominable sin of incest with them, Gen. xix. 31.

2. Idleness, consisting either in the neglect of business, or indulging too much sleep, which occasions many temptations. Thus David first gave way to sloth, and then was tempted to uncleanness; and it is observed, that *at the time when kings go forth to battle*, 2 Sam. xi. 1, 2. and he ought to have been with his army in the field, he tarried at Jerusalem, and slept in the middle of the day; for *in the evening tide he arose from*

*off his bed*; And the heinous sin he was guilty of, which was the greatest blemish in his life, ensued hereupon.

3. Pride in apparel, or other ornaments, beyond the bounds of modesty, or for other ends than what God, when he clothed man at first, intended; when our attire is inconsistent with our circumstances in the world, or the character of persons professing godliness: This God reproves the Jews for, when grown very degenerate, and near to ruin, Isa. iii. 16, &c. *seq.* And Jezebel, when Jehu came in quest of her, *painted her face, and tired her head*; but this did not prevent his executing God's righteous judgments upon her. All these things are mentioned as the sins for which Sodom was infamous; and gave occasion to those other abominations, which provoked God to destroy them, Ezek. xvi. 49. And to this we may add,

4. Keeping evil company: Thus it is said of the lewd woman, *she hath cast down many wounded*, Prov. vii. 26. This will hasten our own ruin; especially if we associate ourselves with such persons out of choice: for it is a sign that our hearts are exceedingly depraved and alienated from God: Nevertheless, if Providence cast our lot amongst bad company, we may escape that guilt and defilement, which would otherwise ensue, if we bear our testimony against their sin, and are *grieved* for it, as Lot was for the filthy conversation of the Sodomites, among whom he dwelt, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Moreover, the frequenting those places where there are mixed dancing, masquerades, stage-plays, &c. which tend to corrupt the principles and practices, and seldom fail of defiling the consciences, and manners of those who attend on them: These are nurseries of vice, and give occasion to this sin, and many others, Prov. vi. 27, compared with 32.

As for the remedies against it, these are, an exercising a constant watchfulness against all temptations thereunto, chap. viii. 9. avoiding all conversation with men or books which tend to corrupt the mind, and fill it with levity, under a pretence of improving it: But more especially a retaining a constant sense of God's all-seeing eye, his infinite purity and vindictive justice, which will induce us to say as Joseph did, in the like case, *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God*, Gen. xxxix. 9. (a)

(a) The Theatre is said to have commenced at Athens, but to have been so much disapproved of, both in Greece and at Rome, that it was allowed no permanency till the days of Pompey. Minutius Felix derided the Christians for abstaining from this amusement. It is not probable therefore that the first Christians required any reproof in any of the Epistles for this vice. But every abuse of it may find its correction in scripture. Morals and piety may be thrown into Dis-

**QUEST. CXL.** *Which is the eighth Commandment ?*

**ANSW.** The eighth Commandment is, [*Thou shalt not steal.*]

**QUEST. CXLI.** *What are the duties required in the eighth Commandment ?*

**ANSW.** The duties required in the eighth Commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts, and commerce between man and man ; rendering to every one his due ; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof ; giving, and lending freely, according to our

logue without reasonable objection. But to turn these things into play, and the amusement of the reprobate, cannot be justified.—There is no fairness in arguing from what they might be, to prove the lawfulness of plays in the state in which they are, always have been, and will probably always be. That they are, and tend to evil is proved by the avidity with which they are frequented by even the worst members of society. They are calculated to excite the affections and passions in the highest manner, and so to render private happiness, domestic enjoyments, and religious observances insipid or disgusting. The reiteration of scenes of impurity; illicit amours, extravagant passions, jealousy, and revenge, will make a silent and secret impression upon the mind, and if they do not promote the same wickedness, they will at least render the mind less abhorrent of such crimes. True religion requires the exclusion of such imaginations, the immediate banishment of such thoughts, that we should mortify and deny ourselves ; “ *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*” The cruelty and bloodshed frequently threatened, or resorted to in defence of false honour ; the pomp, pride, and ambition not unfrequently exhibited upon the stage, must necessarily prompt to like feats in vindication of character, or at least lead to self-importance and fastidiousness ; but the gospel teaches humility, self-denial, lowliness of mind ; “ *Blessed are the poor in spirit.*” When such representations please, they prove the mind corrupt, and become an index of the morals of those who are entertained with such spectacles. The christian duties of meekness, silence, forbearance, humility, bearing the cross, faith, and repentance, are either incapable of being transferred to the stage, or if seen there are exposed to contempt, and ridicule. The addresses to Deity, and prayers there offered, are surely Heaven-provoking blasphemies. The Theatre interrupts religious, domestic, and public duties ; it dissipates and fascinates the mind ; weakens conscience, grieves the Holy Spirit, wastes property, and time ; and unqualifies both for this, and the world to come.

Every one who attends is chargeable with the evil which obtains before him, for he goes voluntarily, he submits himself as to the matter of his amusement to others, and thus with the blessings of Providence, bribes the enemies of God to blaspheme him.

Some men of character for morals have countenanced, and some have written for the stage, perhaps they calculated upon what it might be, and aimed to correct the evil by drawing to it the more respectable of society. But the great majority of men are enemies to God, these will only be pleased with evil, and their pleasure will always be sought, because interest will compel to this. This is therefore doing evil that good may come ; if indeed it can under any circumstances be good, to turn even correct performances, if such there were, into public amusement.

After all there can be no hope of a total removal of this evil, yet we are on this account no more excused from bearing testimony against it, than from opposing other crimes which cannot be wholly prevented.

abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections, concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose those things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and diligence in it; frugality, avoiding unnecessary law-suits, and suretyship, or other like engagements; and an endeavour, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

**T**HIS Commandment supposes, that God has given to every one a certain portion of the good things of this world, that he may lay claim to as his own; which no other has a right to. The general scope and design thereof, is to put us upon using endeavours to promote our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate. As to what concerns ourselves, it respects the government of our affections, and setting due bounds to our desires of worldly things, that they may not exceed what the good providence of God has allotted for us, in order to our comfortable passage through this world. Thus Agar prays, *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me*, Prov. xxx. 8.

As to what respects our endeavours to gain the world; it requires a due care and diligence, to get, and keep a competency thereof; that we may not, through our own default, expose ourselves to those straits and necessities which are the consequence of sloth and negligence, chap. xxiii. 21. chap. xxiv. 30, 31. God may, indeed, give estates to some without any pains, or care to get them, Deut. vi. 10, 11. yet, even in this case, sloth is a sin which brings with it many hurtful lusts, that render riches a snare, and hindrance to their spiritual welfare: Therefore they, who are in prosperous circumstances in the world, ought not to lay aside all care and industry to improve, what they have to the glory of God. But, on the other hand, they who are in a low condition, ought to use a provident care and diligence, in order to their having a comfortable subsistence therein. Accordingly this Commandment obliges us to use all lawful endeavours to promote our own and our neighbour's wealth, and outward estate.

I. To promote our own wealth and estate. This we are to do,

1. By frugality in our expences, avoiding profuseness; and that, either in giving away our substance to unfit objects, to wit, those who are in better circumstances than ourselves, who ought to be givers rather than receivers, Prov. xxii. 16. or else in making large contributions to support a bad cause, and

in consuming our substance on our lusts. Likewise when we are unwarily profuse in those expences, which would be otherwise lawful, did they not exceed our circumstances or income in the world, which contains a disregard of the future estate of our families, and taking a method to reduce ourselves and them to poverty, 1 Tim. v. 8. Or, if our circumstances will admit of large expenses ; yet, to abound therein, merely out of ostentation, and at the same time, to withhold our liberality from the poor is inconsistent with frugality.

2. We ought also to be diligent, and industrious in our calling ; and, in order thereunto,

(1.) We are wisely to make choice of such a calling, in which we may glorify God, and expect his blessing, in order to the promoting our wealth and outward estate ; therefore that business is to be chosen which we are most capable of managing, and has in itself the fewest temptations attending it ; especially such wherein the conscience is not burdened by unlawful oaths, or prostituting solemn ordinances, not designed by Christ as a qualification for them. Moreover, we are not to choose those callings wherein the gain is obtained by oppression or extortion, and which cannot be managed without danger of sinning ; which will bring the blast of providence on all our undertakings. Therefore we are earnestly to desire God's direction in this weighty concern, as well as depend on him for success therein, Eccl. ix. 11. Deut. viii. 18.

(2.) When we have made choice of a lawful calling, we are to manage it in such a way, that we may expect the blessing of God, in order to the promoting our wealth and outward estate. Accordingly,

[1.] Let us pursue and manage it with right and warrantable ends, to wit, the glory of God ; and, in subordination thereunto, our providing for ourselves and families, that we may be in a capacity of doing good to others, and serving the interest of Christ in our day and generation.

[2.] Let us take heed that our secular employments do not rob God of that time, which ought to be devoted to his worship ; and that our hearts be not alienated from him, so that while we are labouring for the world, we should live without God therein.

[3.] Let us take heed that we do not launch out too far, or run too great hazards in trade, resolving that we will be suddenly rich or poor, which may tend to the ruin of our own families, as well as others, 1 Tim. vi. 9.

[4.] Let us bear disappointments in our callings, with patience and submission to the will of God, without murmuring or repining at his wise and sovereign dispensations of providence herein.



II. This Commandment obliges us to promote the wealth and outward estate of our neighbour. This we are to do, by exercising strict justice in our contracts and dealings with all men ; and by relieving the wants and necessities of those who stand in need of our charity.

1. As to what respects the exercise of justice in our dealings.

(1.) We must take heed, that we do not exact upon, or take unreasonable profit of those whom we deal with, arising from the ignorance of some, and the necessities of others, Jer. iii. 15. Neither, must we use any methods to supplant and ruin others, against the laws of trade, by selling goods at a cheaper rate than any one can afford them, thereby doing damage to ourselves with a design to ruin them, who are less able to bear such a loss.

(2.) Those goods, which we know to be faulty, are not, by false arts, or deceitful words, to be sold, as though they were not so, Amos viii. 6. And, on the other hand, the buyer is not to take advantage of the ignorance of the seller, as it sometimes happens ; neither is he to pretend that it is worth less than he really thinks it to be, Prov. xx. 14.

(3.) Nothing is to be diminished in weight or measure, from what was bought, worse goods to be delivered than what were purchased, Amos vii. 5. nor the *balances to be falsified by deceit*, Deut. xxv. 13, 14, 15.

2. We are to promote the good of our poor distressed neighbour, in works of charity ; and that not only by inward sympathy, or bowels of compassion towards him ; but according to our ability, by relieving him. To induce us hereunto, let us consider, that outward good things are talents given us, with this view, that hereby we may be in a capacity of helping others, as well as be needing help ourselves. And when we do this, we may be said to improve what we have received from God, as those who are accountable to him for it, and testify our gratitude to him for outward blessings. It may also be considered, that Christ takes such acts of kindness, when proceeding from an unfeigned love to him, as done to himself, Matt. xxv. 40. Prov, xix. 17. And, to this we may add, that there are many special motives, taken from the objects of our charity, namely, the pressing necessities of some, the excelling holiness of others ; and, in some instances, we may consider, that, by an act of charity, whereby we relieve one, we do good to many ; or the tendency that this may have to promote the interest of Christ in general, when we relieve those that suffer for the sake of the gospel. This leads us to consider,

(1.) Of whom works of charity are required. If this be duly weighed, we shall find, that scarce any are exempted from this duty, except it be those of whom it may be said, there are

none poorer than themselves, or who have no more than what is absolutely necessary to support their families, or such as are labouring hard, to spare out of their necessary expenses, what will but just serve to pay their debts ; or they who are reduced to such straits as to depend upon others, so that they can call nothing they have their own.

Nevertheless, this duty is incumbent ;

[1.] On the rich, out of their abundance.

[2.] On those who are in middle circumstances in the world, who have a sufficiency to lay out in superfluous expenses : And,

[3.] Even the poor ought to give a small testimony of their gratitude to God, by sparing a little, if they can, out of what they get in the world, for those who are poorer than themselves ; which, if it be but a few mites, it may be an acceptable sacrifice to God, Luke xxi. 2, 4. and, if persons have nothing before hand in the world, they ought to work for this end, as well as to maintain themselves and families, Eph. iv. 28.

(2.) We are now to consider, who are to be reckoned objects of our charity. To which it may be answered ; Not the rich, who stand in no need of it, from whom we may expect a sufficient requital, Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14. nor those who are strong and healthy, but yet make a trade of begging, because it is an idle and sometimes a profitable way of living, 2 Thess. iii. 10—12. But such are to be relieved, who are not able to work ; especially if they were not reduced to poverty by their own sloth and negligence, but by the providence of God not succeeding their endeavours ; and if, while they were able, they were ready to all works of charity themselves, 1 Tim. v. 10. and to these we may add, such who are related to us, either in the bonds of nature, or in a spiritual sense, Gal. vi. 10. This leads us to enquire,

(3.) What part, or proportion of our substance, we are to apply to charitable uses ? In answer to this, let it be considered, that the circumstances of persons in the world being so various, as well as their necessary occasions for extraordinary expenses, it is impossible to give a general rule, to be observed by all. However, it must be premised,

[1.] That our present contributions, ought not to preclude all thoughts, about laying up for ourselves or families, for time to come.

[2.] Whatever proportion we give of our gain in the world, some abatements may reasonably be made for losses in trade ; especially if what we give was not determined, or laid aside, for that use before the loss happened. As to what may farther be observed concerning this matter, it ought to be left to the impartial determination of every one, who is to act, as be-



ing sensible that he is accountable to God herein. The apostle lays down one general rule; *Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver, 2 Cor. ix. 7.* But though we pretend not to determine the exact proportion which ought to be given, viz. whether it be a tenth part of their profits, or more, or less; yet it is highly reasonable, that every one should contribute as much in works of charity, as he lays out in mere superfluities; or, at least, spare a part out of his superfluous expenses, for charitable uses. And there are some occasions which may call for large contributions. Thus *the churches in Macedonia* are commended, not only for their giving according to, but *beyond their power*, chap. viii. 1, 2, 3. Three things may be here considered,

1st, The extreme necessities of those whom we are bound to take care of; and, sometimes, the distressed circumstances of the church of God, in general, require larger contributions than ordinary; which was the occasion of the Command mentioned by our Saviour, of selling all, and giving to the poor, which was put in practice in the infancy of the church, or the first planting of the gospel, at Jerusalem.

2dly, Extraordinary instances of the kindness of God, in prospering us, either in worldly or spiritual concerns, beyond our expectation, call for extraordinary expressions of gratitude to God, in laying by for the poor, 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

3dly, When we have committed great sins, or are under very humbling providences, whether personal or national, as being exposed to, or fearing the judgments of God, which seem to be approaching; this calls for deep humiliation, and, together therewith, proportionable acts of charity.

(4.) We are now to consider, with what frame of spirit works of charity are to be performed? To which, it may be answered, that they are to be performed prudently, as our own circumstances will permit, and the necessity of the object requires; also seasonably, not putting this duty off till another time, when the necessities of those, whom we are bound to relieve, call for present assistance, Prov. ii. 28. It is also to be done secretly, as not desiring to be seen of men, or commended by them for it, Matt. vi. 3, 4, and cheerfully, 2 Cor. ix. 7. also with tenderness and compassion to those whose necessities call for relief, as considering how soon God can reduce us to the same extremity which they are exposed to, who are the objects of our charity. It ought to be done likewise with thankfulness to God, that has made us givers, rather than receivers, Acts x. 25. and, as a testimony of our love to Christ, especially when we contribute to the necessities of his members, Matt. x. 42.

**QUEST. CXLII.** *What are the sins forbidden in the eighth Commandment?*

**ANSW.** The sins forbidden in the eighth Commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving any thing that is stolen, fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing landmarks, injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; oppression, extortion, usury, bribery, vexatious law-suits, unjust inclosures, and depopulations; ingrossing commodities to enhance the price, unlawful callings, and all other unjust, or sinful ways of taking, or withholding from our neighbour what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves. Covetousness, inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them, envying at the prosperity of others. As likewise idleness, prodigality, wasteful gaming, and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate; and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.

**T**HIS Commandment forbids, in general all kind of theft; and may include in it that which is very seldom called by this name, to wit, the robbing of ourselves and families; which we may be said to do, by neglecting our worldly calling, or by the imprudent management thereof. Also, by lending larger sums of money than our circumstances will well bear, to those who are never like to pay it again; or, which is in effect the same, by being surety for such. Moreover we rob ourselves and families, by being profuse and excessive in our expenses; and by consuming what we have, while pursuing our pleasures more than business; or by gaming, whereby we run the risque of losing part of our substance, and thereby reducing ourselves, or others, to poverty. On the other hand, we rob ourselves and families, when, out of a design to lay up a great deal for the time to come, we deprive ourselves and them, of the common necessities of life, which is, in effect, to starve for the present, to prevent our starving for the future. But, passing this by, we shall consider this Commandment more especially, as it respects our defrauding others; and this is done,

I. By taking away any part of their wealth, or worldly substance. This is generally known by the name of theft, and that, with the greatest severity, in proportion to its aggravations; and they who are guilty of it, are, without repentance, excluded from the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. How-

ever, let it be considered, that every kind of theft does not deserve an equal degree of punishment from men ; for sometimes hereby the owner of what was stolen, receives but little damage ; though in this case, some punishment, short of death, ought to be inflicted, to reform the wicked person, and deter him from going on in the breach of this Commandment, from less to greater sins.

By the law of God, a simple theft was punished with restitution of double, and sometimes, four times as much as the damage amounted to, which was sustained thereby, *Exod. xxii. 1, 4, 7.* Yet, in other cases, the theft was punished with death, when it had in it some circumstances that aggravated it in an uncommon degree ; as if an house, which ought to be reckoned a man's castle, be broke open, and that, in the night-time, when he is in no condition of defending himself, or his worldly substance. In this case the law is not unjust, that punishes the thief with death ; and this is supposed in that law which says, that he that kills such an one who *breaks up* his neighbour's house by night, shall have *no blood shed for him*, *ver. 2.* But, in other instances, confinement, and hard labour, may be as effectual a way to put a stop to this sin ; and is rather to be chosen than punishment with death. Thus concerning this Commandment, as broken by theft.

II. It is farther broken, by unfaithfulness, or breach of trust ; whether the trust be devolved on us by nature, as that of parents towards their children ; or by contract, as that of servants, who are entrusted with the goods and secrets of their masters ; or, that which is founded in the desire and request of those who constitute persons executors to their wills, or guardians to orphans, under age, provided they accept of this trust ; I say, if these violate their trust, by embezzling or squandering away the substance of others, defrauding them, to enrich themselves. This is not only theft, but perfidiousness, and highly provoking to God ; and deserves a more severe punishment from men, than is usually inflicted.

III. This Commandment may be said to be broken, by borrowing, and not paying just debts ; as the Psalmist says, *The wicked borroweth and payeth not again*, *Psal. xxxvii. 21.* Nevertheless, there are some cases in which a man is not guilty hereof, though he borrows and does not pay, *viz.* If, when he borrowed, there was a probability of his being able to repay it ; or otherwise, if he discovered his circumstances fully to him, of whom he borrowed, to whom it would hereby appear, whether there was any likelihood of paying him or not ; or if he gave full conviction, when he borrowed, that he was able to pay, but the providence of God, without his own default, has rendered him unable ; in this case mercy is to be shewn him.

and he is not to be reckoned a breaker of this Commandment. However, a person is guilty of the breach hereof, in borrowing, and not paying debts.

1. If the borrower pretends his circumstances to be better than they are, and so makes the lender believe, that, in a limited time, he shall be able to repay him; when, in his own conscience, he apprehends that there is no probability hereof.

2. When a person was in such circumstances at the time of his borrowing, that by industry in his calling, he might be able to pay the creditor; but, by neglect of business, or embezzling his substance, he renders himself unable to pay, such an one is chargeable with the breach of this Commandment.

3. If pity be shewn, by compounding for a part, instead of the whole debt, in case of present insolvency; though the debtor, in form of law, be discharged, with the creditor's consent; yet the law of God and nature, obliges him to pay the whole debt, if providence makes him able hereafter; or else he can hardly be excused from the breach of this Commandment.

This leads us to enquire, what judgment we may pass on the Israelites *borrowing of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold*; which we read of in Exod. xii. 35. whether they were herein guilty of the breach of this Commandment.

*Answ.* The word \* which we render *borrowed*, might as well be rendered *asked*, or *demanded*. And so we must suppose, that the Egyptians were so desirous that the Israelites should be gone, apprehending, that if they continued, they were all dead men, that they might have of them whatever they demanded, as necessary for this expedition; and, if they came back again, as they supposed they should, they would be obliged to return them. If this be the sense of the Hebrew word, there is no difficulty in the text, nor any appearance of the breach of this Commandment.

But since the sense of the word is indeterminate, signifying to *demand*, as well as to *borrow*, as was before observed, God's order imports the former; though they might understand it in the latter, as denoting a borrowing with a design to restore. Therefore, let it be considered;

(1.) That they did this by God's command, who has a right to take away the goods that one possesses, if he pleases, and give them to another; for he takes away nothing but his own.

\* The Hebrew word *שָׁאַל*, which is here used, does not only signify *commodavit*, or *usui dedit*, or *accepit*, but *petiit*, or *postulavit*; in the last of which senses it is to be understood, in Deut. x. 12. What doth the Lord require or demand of thee, &c. And in Judges v. 25. where the same word is used, it is said, that Sisera asked water of Jael; not as one that was borrowing it of her, but as a gratuity for former kindness which he had shewn to her.

Now, that they had his warrant for borrowing or demanding these things of the Egyptians, appears from the second verse.

(2.) The reason why God ordered them to do this, if we look beyond his absolute sovereignty, was, because the Israelites deserved them as wages, for their hard service; and this might be reckoned a reward of the good offices that Joseph had done to that kingdom; which had been long since forgotten.

(3.) As to what concerns the Israelites, it is probable, they expected nothing else but to return again, and restore to the owners what they had borrowed of them, after they had sacrificed to God in the wilderness; at least, they were wholly passive, and disposed to follow the divine conduct, by the hand of Moses. And when they were in the wilderness, they could not restore what they had borrowed, since the owners thereof, as is more than probable, were drowned in the Red Sea, whose revenge and covetousness, as well as Pharaoh's orders, prompted them to follow them. Or if some of the owners might have been heard of, as yet surviving, their right to what was borrowed of them, was forfeited, by reason of the hostile pursuit of Pharaoh and his hosts, which put them into a state of war.

This may lead us farther to enquire, what judgment we may pass on the many ravages and plunders that are generally made by armies engaged in war; whether they may be reckoned a breach of this Commandment? And,

[1.] It is beyond dispute, that, if the war be unjust, as all the blood that is shed, is murder, or a breach of the sixth Commandment; so all the damage that is done by burning of houses, or taking away the goods of those against whom it is carried on, is a breach of this Commandment. But,

[2.] If we suppose the war to be just, and the damage done only to those who are immediately concerned in it, and that it is an expedient to procure peace; it is unquestionably lawful, and no breach of this Commandment. Thus when the Israelites were commanded to destroy the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, as criminals, they were admitted to seize on the spoil of other nations, who were remote from them, Deut. xx. 14, 15. when conquered by them.

[3.] As for those plunders and robberies which are committed on private persons, who are not concerned in the war any otherwise than as subjects of the government, against which it is undertaken; and especially, if their loss has no direct tendency to procure peace; this can hardly be justified from being a breach of this Commandment.

IV. This Commandment is also broken by oppression; whereby the rich may be said to rob, and even swallow up the

poor, Psal. xiv. 4. Psal. x. 9. Micah iii. 2, 3. Now there are various ways by which persons may be said to oppress others.

1. By engrossing those goods which are necessary for food or clothing, thereby to enhance the price thereof, whereby the poor are brought into great extremities.

2. When persons enrich themselves out of the unmerciful labour exacted of their servants, whom they will hardly suffer to live, to eat the just reward of their service. Such a master was Laban to Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 41, 42.

3. When landlords turn their tenants out of their houses or farms, when they find that they get a comfortable subsistence by their industry, taking occasion from thence, to raise their rent, in proportion to the success God gives them therein.

4. When the rich make the poor suffer by long delays, to pay their debts, that they may gain advantage by the improvement of that money which they ought to have paid them.

V. A person may be said to break this Commandment, by engaging in unjust and vexatious law-suits. However, it is to be owned, that going to law is not, at all times, unjust; for it is sometimes a relief against oppression; and it is agreeable to the law of nature for every one to defend his just rights; and for this reason God appointed judges, (to determine such-like causes) to whom the people were to have recourse, that they might *shew them the sentence of judgment*, Deut. xvii. 8, 9. Nevertheless, we must sometimes conclude law-suits to be oppressive; as,

1. When the rich make use of the law, to prevent, or prolong the payment of their debts, or to take away the rights of the poor, who, as they suppose, will rather suffer injuries than attempt to defend themselves.

2. When bribes are either given or taken, with a design to pervert justice, 1 Sam. viii. 2. And to this we may add, that the person who pleads an unrighteous cause, concealing the known truth, perverting the sense of the law, or alleging, that for law or fact, which he knows not to be so; and the judge who passes sentence against his conscience, respecting the person of the rich, and brow-beating the poor; these are all confederates in oppression; and such methods of proceeding, are beyond dispute, a breach of this Commandment.

*Obj.* Our Saviour forbids going to law, though it were to recover our just rights; when he says, *If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also*, Matt. v. 40.

*Ans.* To this it may be replied; that some things may be omitted for prudential reasons, which would not otherwise be unlawful to be done. Our Saviour does not forbid using our endeavours, in a legal way, to recover our right in all cases:



but more especially at that time, when his followers could hardly expect to meet with justice. And, it may be, they were oppressed by fines, or distress, laid on them, for their embracing Christianity; in this case he advises them, patiently to bear injuries, when they could hardly expect relief from their unjust judges.

VI. This Commandment is broken by extortion, or oppressive usury. Thus it is said of the righteous man, *He putteth not out his money to usury*, Psal. xv. 5. The word \* signifies *biting* usury; which is, beyond dispute, unlawful. We have elsewhere considered in what cases the Israelites might take usury, and when not †. And, upon the whole, it is certainly unlawful, to exact more than the legal rate or worth of the loan of money; or to exact any usury of the poor; especially for that which was borrowed to supply them with the necessities of life.

Having considered in what instances this Commandment is broken, we proceed to shew, what a person ought to do, who has been guilty of the breach thereof, in any of the forementioned instances, in order to his making restitution for the injuries he has done to his neighbour. This ought always to attend the exercise of sincere repentance in those who have been guilty of this sin, of which we have an instance in Zaccheus, Luke xix. 8. and the neglect hereof will be like a worm at the root of ill gotten estates, and will be little better than a continual theft.

*Obj.* 1. To this it is objected, that this may be a prejudice to our reputation, by making our crime public, which before was only known to ourselves.

*Ans.* To this it may be replied;

1. That, what we do in this matter, is not really a reproach, but an honour; and it is hardly to be supposed, that he, to whom we perform so just and unexpected a duty, will be so barbarous as to divulge or improve this against us, to our disadvantage.

2. There are private ways of retaliation, whereby the injured party may receive what is sent to him, in a way of restitution, and not know from whom it comes; or, good turns may be done to him, in a way of compensation for the damages he has received, and he not know, that they are done with this design; and, by this means, we disburden our consciences, perform a necessary duty, and, at the same time, prevent the supposed ill-consequences that might attend it.

*Obj.* 2. It is farther objected, that sometimes the making restitution is impracticable; as when the person injured is

\* From 703, *memoria*.

† See 3 vol. p. 422.

dead, and we know of none that has a right to receive it. And sometimes we may have been guilty of so many instances of fraud and oppression, and, that to such a great number of persons, that it is next to impossible, to make restitution.

*Ans.* To this it may be replied; that when it is impossible for us to make restitution to those whom we have injured; or, when we know of none that survive them, who have a right to receive it, the best expedient, I apprehend, we can make use of, is, to give it to the poor; for, since it is not, in justice, our own, we do, as it were, hereby give it to the Lord, who is the original proprietor of all things.

**QUEST. CXLIII.** *What is the ninth Commandment?*

*Ans.* The ninth Commandment is, [*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*]

**QUEST. CXLIV.** *What are the duties required in the ninth Commandment?*

*Ans.* The duties required in the ninth Commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbour as well as our own. Appearing, and standing for, and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbours; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name, sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging their gifts and graces; defending their innocence; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admitt an evil report concerning them, discouraging tale-bearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth, keeping of lawful promises, studying and practising of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.

**QUEST. CXLV.** *What are the sins forbidden in the ninth Commandment?*

*Ans.* The sins forbidden in the ninth Commandment, are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbours as well as our own, especially in public judicature, giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, out-facing and over-bearing the truth, passing unjust sentence, calling evil



good, and good evil, rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous; and the righteous according to the work of the wicked; forgery, concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice, speaking untruth, lying, slandering, back-biting, detracting, tale-bearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial, censuring, misconstruing intentions, words, and actions, flattering, vain-glorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others, denying the gifts and graces of God, aggravating smaller faults, hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins when called to a free confession, unnecessary discovering of infirmities, raising false rumours, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defence, evil suspicion, envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavouring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy, scornful contempt, fond admiration, breach of lawful promises, neglecting such things as are of good report, and practising or not avoiding ourselves or not hindering, what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.

**I**N this Commandment we are to consider,

I. What are the duties required? These are,

1. Our endeavouring to promote truth in all we say or do; and that, as to what either concerns ourselves, or others. As to what concerns ourselves, we are to fence against every thing that savours of deceit or hypocrisy; and, in our whole conversation, endeavour to be what we pretend to be; or to speak nothing but what we know, or believe to be true, upon good evidence, the contrary whereunto is lying. As to what concerns others, we must not neglect to reprove sin in them, how much soever our worldly interest may lie at stake. Thus Azariah reprov'd Uzziah, 2 Chron. xxvi. 18. and Elijah, Ahab; though this could not but be an hazardous attempt in each of them. Moreover, we must endeavour to undeceive others, who are mistaken; especially if the error, they are liable to, be of such a nature, that it endangers the loss of their salvation. We are also to vindicate those who are reproached by others, to the utmost of our power, according as the cause will admit of it.

2. This Commandment obliges us, to endeavour to promote our own, and our neighbour's good name.

(1.) Our own good name; which consists, not in our having the applause of the world, but in our deserving the just esteem thereof, and in our being loved and valued for our usefulness to mankind in general. And this esteem is not to be gained by commending ourselves, or doing any thing, but what we engage in with a good conscience, and the fear of God. And in order hereto, we must, take heed that we do not contract an intimacy with those, whose conversation is a reproach to the gospel, Prov. xxviii. 7. Also we must render good for evil, and not give occasion to those, who watch for our halting, to insult us as to any thing, besides unavoidable infirmities, 1 Pet. ii. 12. Phil. iv. 8.

This degree of honour in the world, we ought first to endeavour to gain, especially so far as it is necessary to our honouring God, and being useful to others. And then we must be careful to maintain our good name; forasmuch as the loss thereof, especially, in those who have made a public profession of religion, will reflect dishonour on the ways of God, from whence his enemies will take occasion to blaspheme, 2 Sam. xii. 14. But if all our endeavours to maintain our character and reputation are to no purpose; being, nevertheless, followed with reproach as well as hatred and malice, from an unjust and censorious world; let us look to it, that if *we suffer reproach, it be wrongfully; not as evil doers, but for keeping a good conscience in the sight of God;* which may be a means to make those that reproach us, *ashamed*, 1 Pet. iii. 16. Moreover, let us count the reproach of Christ, that is, for his sake, a glory, chap. iv. 14. Acts v. 41. Again, let us always value their good opinion most, who are Christ's best friends; and expect little else but ill treatment from his enemies; and then we shall be less disappointed, when we are exposed to it. And let us not decline any thing that is our duty, in which the honour of God, and the welfare of his people, is concerned, for fear of reproach; but in this case, leave our good name in Christ's hand; whose providence is concerned, for, and takes care of, the honour, as well as the wealth and outward estate of his people.

(2.) We are to endeavour to maintain the good name of others; and in order thereto, we must render to them those marks of respect and honour, which their character, and advancement in gifts, or grace, calls for; yet without being guilty of servile flattery or dissimulation. And if they are in danger of doing any thing that may forfeit their good name, we are carefully to reprove them, while we have a due regard to any good thing that is in them, towards the Lord their God; and, in maintaining their good name, we are to conceal their faults, when we may do it without betraying the interest of

Christ; and especially when the honour of God, and their good, is, by this means, better promoted, than by divulging them, 1 Pet. iv. 8. Prov. xvii. 9.

However, this is not without some exceptions; and therefore it may be observed, that we are not to conceal the crimes committed by others.

[1.] If private admonition for scandalous sins committed, prove ineffectual, and the discovering them to others may make the offender ashamed, and promote his reformation; then we are not to conceal his crimes, though the divulging them may lessen the esteem which others have of him, since it is better for him to be ashamed before men, than perish in his hypocrisy, Matt. xviii. 16, 17.

[2.] If the crime committed be such, that shame, and the loss of his good name, be a just punishment due to it, we are not to conceal it, thereby to stop the course of justice.

[3.] When the honour and good name of an innocent person cannot be maintained, unless by divulging the crimes of the guilty, he that, in this case, has forfeited his good name, ought to lose it, rather than he that has not.

We shall close this head by considering what reason we have to endeavour to maintain the good name of others. To take away our neighbour's good name, is to take away one of the most valuable privileges he is possessed of, the loss whereof may be inexpressibly detrimental to him. And sometimes it may affect his secular interest; so that hereby we may be said to take away his wealth and outward estate, and prevent his usefulness in that station of life in which providence has fixed him. Accordingly we are to express a due concern for the honour and reputation of others as well as ourselves. Thus concerning the duties required in this Commandment.

II. We proceed to consider the sins forbidden therein; which are contained in that general expression bearing false witness: This may either respect ourselves or others. A person may be said to bear false witness against himself; and that either in thinking too highly or meanly of himself; in the former respect we value ourselves, or our supposed attainments, either in gifts or graces, too much, in which we are, for the most part, mistaken, and pass a wrong judgment on them, and are ready to say, with the church at Laodicea, *I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,* Rev. iii. 17. These, on the one hand, mistake the common gifts of the Spirit, for grace, and conclude themselves to be something, when they are nothing: And, on the other hand, many conclude, that they have no grace, and rank themselves among hypocrites and unbelievers, when their hearts are right:

with God, and they have had large experience of the powerful influences of his Spirit, but are not sensible thereof. Thus Christ says to the church in Smyrna, *I know thy poverty; but thou art rich*, chap. ii. 9. In these respects persons may be said to bear false witness against themselves.

But that which is principally forbidden in this Commandment, is, a person's bearing false witness against his neighbour; and that when he either endeavours to deceive, or do him prejudice, as to his reputation in the world; the one is called lying, the other back-biting or slandering. As to the former of these, when we speak that which is contrary to what we know to be truth, with a design to deceive, this is what we call telling a lye; and when we act that which is contrary to truth, it may be deemed a practical lye; both of which are very great sins.

1. A person is guilty of lying, when he speaks that which is contrary to truth, with a design to deceive: This the old prophet at Bethel did, to the prophet of the Lord; upon which occasion it is said, that he *lyed unto him*, 1 Kings xiii. 18. That this may be farther considered, let it be observed, that it is not barely a speaking what is contrary to truth; for that a person may do, and be guiltless; as,

[1.] When there is some circumstance that discovers him to speak *ironically*; and therefore he does not appear to have a design to deceive those, to whom he addresses his discourse. Thus when the prophet Micaiah said to Ahab, *Go and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it*, viz. *Ramoth-Gilead, into the hands of the kings*, chap. xxii. 15. it is plain that he spake the language of the false prophets, and that Ahab understood him in this sense, or suspected that he spake *ironically*; and therefore says, *How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing but that which is true?* ver. 16. Upon which, the prophet tells him, without an *irony*, though in a metaphorical way, which Ahab easily understood; *I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: And the Lord said, These have no master, let them return every man to his house in peace*, ver. 17. which was an intimation, that, if he went up to Ramoth-Gilead, he should fall in battle: Upon which occasion Ahab says to Jehoshaphat, *Did I not tell thee, that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil*, ver. 18. by which it appears, that the prophet did not deceive him, notwithstanding the mode of speaking, which he at first made use of, without considering it as an irony, seemed to intimate as much.

[2.] A person may speak that which is contrary to truth, being imposed on himself, without any design to deceive another. This cannot, indeed, according to the description before given,

be properly called a lie: However, he may sin by asserting too positively, that which he thinks to be true from probable circumstances, or uncertain information; especially if what he reports, carries in it that which is matter of scandal, or censure: This was the case of Job's friends, who did not tell a lie against their own consciences: Nevertheless, they were too peremptory in charging him with hypocrisy, without sufficient ground; therefore God imputes *folly* to them; in that *they had not spoken of him the thing which was right*, Job xlii. 8:

Here it may be enquired, whether a person, who designs not to deceive, nor speaks contrary to the dictates of his own conscience; yet if he promises to do a thing, and does it not, is guilty of lying? To which it may be replied;

1st, That if a person promises to do a thing, which, at the same time he really designs, and afterwards uses all the endeavours he could, to fulfil his promise, and something unforeseen happens, in the course of providence, which prevents the execution thereof, he cannot, properly speaking, be said to be guilty of a lie; though we ought not to promise any thing but upon this supposition, that God enables us to perform it.

2dly, If a person intends to do a thing, and, accordingly, promises to do it, but afterwards sees some justifiable reason to alter his mind, he is not guilty of a lie; since all creatures are supposed to be mutable. Thus the angels told Lot, that they would *abide in the street all night*; but afterwards, upon his intreaty, they *went into the house with him*, Gen. xix. 2, 3. And our Saviour, when he walked with his disciples to Emmaus, *made as though he would have gone further*: But they constrained him, saying, *abide with us*; and he went in to *tarry with them*, Luke xxiv. 28, 29. But, notwithstanding this if a person promises to do any thing that is of advantage to another, as the paying a just debt, &c. it is not a sufficient excuse, to clear him from the guilt of sin, if he pretends that he has altered his mind, supposing that it is in his power to fulfil it: For this is, indeed, a breach of the eighth Commandment; and in some respects, it will appear to him, to be a violation of this.

That we may more particularly speak concerning the sin of lying which multitudes are chargeable with, let it be observed, that there are three sorts of lies,

1st, When a person speaks that which is contrary to truth, and the dictates of his own conscience, with a design to cover a fault or excuse himself or others: This we generally call an officious lie\*.

2dly, When a person speaks that which is contrary to the

known truth; in a jesting way ; and embellishes his discourse with his own fictions, designing hereby to impose on others : This they are guilty of, who invent false news, or tell stories for truth, which they know to be false. This is to lie in a jesting, ludicrous manner \*.

3dly, There is a pernicious lie, viz. when a person raises and spreads a false report with a design to do injury to another ; which is a complicated crime, and the worst sort of lying †.

Here there are two or three enquiries which it may not be improper to take notice of ;

(1.) Whether the midwives were guilty of an officious lie, when they told Pharaoh, in Exod. i. 19. that *the Hebrew women were delivered of their children ere they came in unto them* ; concerning whom it is said, in the following verse, *that God dealt well with the midwives* for this report, which carries in it the appearance of a lie.

Ans. To this it may be replied,

[1.] That they seem not to have been guilty of a lie ; for it is not improbable, that God in mercy to the Hebrew women, and their children, might give them uncommon strength ; so that they might be delivered without the midwives assistance : Or,

[2.] If this was not the case of all the Hebrew women, but only of some, or many of them, the midwives report contains only a concealing part of the truth, while they related in other respects, that which was matter of fact. Now a person is not guilty of telling a lie, who does not discover all that he knows. There is a vast difference between concealing a part of the truth, and telling that which is directly false. No one is obliged to tell all he knows, to one, who, he is sure, will make a bad use of it. This seems to be the case of the midwives ; and therefore their action was justifiable, and commended by God, they being not guilty, properly speaking, of an officious lye.

(2.) Another enquiry is, what judgment we must pass concerning the actions of Rahab, the harlot, who invented an officious lye, to save the spies from those who pursued them, in Josh. ii. 4, 5. it is said, *she took the two men and hid them* ; and, at the same time, pretended, so those who were sent to enquire of her concerning them, that *she wist not whence they were* ; but that they went out of the city about the time of the shutting of the gate ; though whither they went she knew not. The main difficulty we have to account for, is what the apostle says, in which he seems to commend this action, in Heb. xi.

\* This is called *mendacium jocosum* † This is called *mendacium perniciosum*



31. *By faith Rahab perished not with them that believed not; when she had received the spies with peace.*

*Answ.* To which it may be replied, that the apostle says, indeed, that she *received the spies with peace*, that is, she protected, and did not betray them into the hand of their enemies: But this act of faith does not relate directly to the lie that she invented to conceal them; for, doubtless, she would have been more clear from the guilt of sin, had she refused to give the messengers any answer relating to them, and so had given them leave to search for them, and left the event hereof to providence. This, indeed, was a very difficult duty; for it might have endangered her life; and her choosing to secure them and herself, by inventing this lie, brought with it a degree of guilt, and was an instance of the weakness of her faith in this respect.

But, on the other hand, that faith which the apostle commends in her, respects some other circumstances attending this action; and, accordingly, it is not said, that *by faith* she made the report to the messengers concerning the spies; but *she received them with peace*: And there are several things in which her faith was very remarkable, as,

[1.] That she was confident that *the Lord would give them the land*, which they were contending for, Josh. ii. 9.

[2.] In that she makes a just inference relating to this matter, from the wonders that God had wrought for them in the red sea, ver. 10. And,

[3.] In that noble confession which she makes, that *the Lord their God, is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath*, ver. 11.

[4.] Her faith appears, in that she put herself under their protection, and desired to take her lot with them; which was done at the hazard of her own life; which she might have saved, and probably, have received a reward, had she betrayed them. This, I conceive to be a better vindication of Rahab's conduct, than that which is alleged, by some who suppose, that by entering into confederacy with the spies, she put herself into a state of war with her own country-men, and so was not obliged to speak truth to the men of Jericho; since this would have many ill consequences attending it, and give too much countenance to persons deceiving others, under pretence of being in a state of war with them. And, as to what the Papists say in her vindication, that a good design will justify a bad action; that it is not true in fact; and therefore not to be applied to her case.

(3.) It might be farther enquired, what judgment ought we to pass on the method that Jacob took to obtain the blessing, when he told his father, *I am Esau, thy first-born; I have*

*done according as thou badest me, Gen. xxvii. 19. whether he was guilty of a lie herein?*

*Ans.* There is not the least doubt but that he was. Some, indeed, endeavour to excuse him, by alleging, that he had, before this, bought the birth-right of Esau; and, upon this account he calls himself Isaac's first-born. But this will not clear him from the guilt of a lye; since it was an equivocation, and spoken with a design to deceive. Others own it to have been a lye; but extenuate it, from the consideration of God's having designed the blessing for him before he was born, chap. xxv. 31. But these do not at all mend the matter: For, though God may permit, or over-rule the sinful actions of men to bring about his own purpose; yet this does not, in the least, extenuate their sin.

That which may therefore be observed, with reference to this action of his, and the consequence thereof, is, that good men are sometimes liable to sinful infirmities, as Jacob was; who, was followed with many sore rebukes of providence, which made the remaining part of his life very uneasy.

1st, In his living in exile twenty years, with Laban, an hard master, and an unjust and unnatural father-in-law.

2dly, In the great distress that befel him in his return; occasioned first by Laban's pursuit of him, and then by the tidings that he received of his brother Esau's *coming out to meet him*; (being prompted hereto by revenge which he had long harboured in his breast) *with four hundred men*, from whom he expected nothing less than the destruction of himself, and his whole family,

3dly, He did not obtain deliverance from the hand of God without *great wrestling*, chap. xxxii. 24—25. and this attended with *weeping*, as well as *making supplication*, Hos. xii. 4. and, though he prevailed, and so obtained the blessing, and therewith forgiveness of his sin; yet God so ordered it, that he should carry the mark thereof upon him, as long as he lived, by touching the hollow of his thigh, which occasioned an incurable lameness.

(4.) Another enquiry is, whether the prophet Elijah did not tell a lie to the Syrian host, who were before Dothan, in quest of him, when he said, in 2 Kings vi. 19. *This is not the way, neither is this the city: Follow me, and I will bring you to the man you seek. But he led them to Samaria?*

*Ans.* If what he says to them be duly considered, it will appear not to be a lie; for he told them nothing but what proved true, according to the import of his words; for,

1st, He does not say, I am not the man ye seek, which would have been a lie; neither does he say, the man is not here:



but he tells them, *I will lead you to the place where ye shall find him*, or have him discovered and presented before you.

*Solly*, When he says, *This is not the way ; neither is this the city ;* he does not say, this is not the way to Dothan ; neither is this the city so called ; for then they would have been able to have convicted him of a lie ; for they knew that they were at Dothan before they were struck with blindness : But the plain meaning of his words is, that this is not your way to find him ; since the men of this city will not deliver him to you ; but *I will lead you to the place where you shall see him ;* and so he led them to Samaria, upon which their eyes were opened, and they saw him : So that this was not a lie. And the reason of his management was, that the king of Israel, and the Syrian host, might be convinced, that they were poor creatures in God's hand, and that he could easily turn their counsels into foolishness, and cause their attempts to miscarry with shame, as well as disappointment.

(5.) It may be farther enquired, whether the apostle Paul was guilty of a lie ; when, being charged, in Acts xxiii. 4, 5. with *reviling God's high priest*, he says, *I wist not that he was the high priest ?* How was it possible that he should entertain any doubt concerning his being the high priest ; which none, who were present, could, in the least, question ?

*Answer*. We may suppose, that the apostle, when he says, *I wist not that he was the high priest*, intends nothing else, but I do not own him to be the high priest, as you call him ; for he is not an high priest of God's appointing or approving ; which, had he been, he would have acted more becoming that character ; and then I should have had no occasion to have told him, *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall ;* for that would have been a *reviling him* ; since I know that scripture very well, that says, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people ;* therefore he intimates, that, though he was an high priest of man's making, he was not one of God's approving ; and accordingly he was to be treated with contempt, instead of that regard which was formerly paid to the high priests, when they were better men, and acted more agreeable to their character. No one, that deserves to be called God's high priest, would have ordered a prisoner, who came to be tried for his life, instead of making his defence, to be smitten on the mouth.

But, suppose we render the words agreeably to our translation, I did not understand that he was the high priest, he may be vindicated from the charge of telling a lie, if we consider,

1st, That this was a confused assembly, and not a regular court of judicature, in which the judge, or chief magistrate, is known to all, by the place in which he sits, or the part he acts in trying causes.

2dly, The high priest, in courts of judicature, was not known by any robe or distinct habit that he wore, as judges now are; for he never wore any other but his common garments, which were the same that other people wore, except when he ministered in offering gifts and sacrifices in the temple. Therefore the apostle could not know him by any distinct garment that he wore.

3dly, Through the corruption of the times, the high priest was changed almost every year, according to the will of the chief governor, who advanced his own friends to that dignity, and oftentimes sold it for money; it is therefore probable, that Ananias had not been long high-priest; and Paul was now a stranger at Jerusalem, and so might not know that he was high priest. Thus, if we take the words in this sense, in which they are commonly understood, the apostle may be sufficiently vindicated from the charge of telling a lie.

(6.) It may be farther enquired, what judgment we may pass concerning David's pretence, when he came to Abimelech, in 1 Sam. xxi. 2. that *the king commanded him a business, which no one was to know any thing of; and that he had appointed his servants to such and such a place; and also of his feigning himself mad, before the king of Gath, ver. 13. which dissimulation can be reckoned no other than a practical lie.*

*Ans.* In both these instances he must be allowed to have sinned, and therefore not proposed as a pattern to us; and all that can be inferred from it is, that there is a great deal of the corruption of nature remaining in the best of God's people. What he told Abimelech was certainly a lye; and all that he expected to gain by it, was only a supply of his present necessities; the consequence whereof was, the poor man's losing his life, together with all the priests', except Abiathar, by Saul's inhumanity. And David seems to be truly sensible of this sin, as appears from Psal. xxxiv. which, as is intimated in the title thereof, was penned on this occasion; in which he arms others against it, in ver. 13. *Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile:* And in ver. 18. he seems to relate his own experience, when he says, *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

As to his behaviour before the king of Gath, which was a visible lie, discovered in his actions; it can, by no means, be excused from being a breach of this Commandment. It is, indeed, alleged by some, to extenuate his fault; that he was afraid that his having killed Goliath, would have induced Achish to take away his life; as appears from what is said in ver. 11, 12. Nevertheless, it may be considered as an aggravation of his sin,

[1.] That his fear seems to have been altogether groundless ; for, why should he suppose that the king of Gath would break through all the laws of arms and honour, since Goliath had been killed in a fair duel, the challenge having first been given by himself ? why then should David fear that he would kill him for that, more than any other hostilities committed in war ? Besides, it is plain from what Achish says, in ver. 15. *Have I need of mad-men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad-man in my presence ? should this fellow come into mine house ?* that the king of Gath was so far from designing to revenge Goliath's death on him, that he intended to employ him in his service, and take him into his house ; but this mean action of his made him despised by all ; for it seems probable, by Achish's saying, *Have ye brought this fellow to play the mad-man ?* that he perceived it to be a feigned, and not a real distraction. And this was overruled by the providence of God, to let the Philistines know, that the greatest hero is but a low-spirited man, if his God be not with him.

[2.] If we suppose that there had been just ground for his fear, the method taken to secure himself, contained a distrust of providence ; which would, doubtless, have delivered him without his dissembling, or thus demeaning himself, or using such an indirect method in order thereunto. Thus concerning the violation of this Commandment, by speaking that which is contrary to truth.

2. This Commandment is farther broken, by acting that which is contrary to truth ; which is what we call hypocrisy : And this may be considered,

(1.) As that which is a reigning sin, inconsistent with a state of grace ; in which respect an hypocrite is opposed to a true believer. Such make a fair shew of religion ; but it is with a design to be seen of men, Matt. vi. 5. They are sometimes, indeed, represented as *seeking* God, and *enquiring early*, or with a kind of earnestness after him, when under his afflicting hand ; but this is deemed no other than a *flattering him with their mouth, and a lying unto him with their tongues ; inasmuch as their heart is not right with him*, Psal. lxxviii. 34,—37. And elsewhere, they are said to *love the praise of men more than the praise of God*, John xii. 43.

(2.) It may be farther considered, as that which believers are sometimes chargeable with, which is an argument that they are sanctified but in part ; but this rather respects some particular actions, and not the tenor of their conversation : Thus the apostle Paul charges Peter with dissimulation, Gal. ii. 11,—13. though he was far from deserving the character of an hypocrite, as to his general conversation. And our Saviour cautions his disciples against hypocrisy, as that which they were

in danger of being overtaken with, Luke xii. 1. though he does not charge them with it as a reigning sin, as he did the Scribes and Pharisees, whom he compares to *painted sepulchres*, Matt. xxiii. 27, 28. nor were they such as the apostle speaks of, whom he calls *double-minded men, who are unstable in all their ways*, James i. 8.

As to that hypocrisy which we may call a reigning sin, this may be known,

[1.] By a person's accommodating himself to all those whom he converses with, how much soever this may tend to the dishonour of Christ and the gospel: And this may give us occasion to enquire,

*First*, Whether the apostle Paul was in any respects, chargeable with this sin, when he says, in 1 Cor. ix. 20—22. *Unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* For the understanding of this scripture, and vindicating the apostle from the charge of hypocrisy, let it be considered,

1st, That this compliance he here speaks of, was not with a design to gain the applause of the world, but to serve the interest of Christ; neither did he connive at, or give countenance to, that false worship, or those sinful practices of any, that were contrary to the faith, or purity of the gospel. Therefore when he says, *Unto the Jews, I became as a Jew*; he does not intend that he gave them the least ground to conclude, that it was an indifferent matter, whether they adhered to, or laid aside the observation of the ceremonial law: For, he expressly tells some of the church at Galatia, who were supposed to Judaize, that this was contrary to the *liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, a being again entangled with the yoke of bondage*; and that if they were circumcised, *Christ should profit them nothing*; and, that they were *fallen from grace*; that is, turned aside from the faith of the gospel, Gal. v. 1,—4. Therefore, in this sense he did not become as a Jew, to the Jews. Neither did he so far comply with the Gentiles, as to give them ground to conclude, that the superstition and idolatry, which they were guilty of, was an harmless thing, and might still be practised by them. Therefore,

2dly, The meaning of his compliance with the Jews or Gentiles, is nothing else but this; that whatever he found praise-worthy in them, he commended; and if, in any instan-

ces, they were addicted to their former rites, or modes of worship, he endeavoured to draw them off from them, not by a severe, and rigid behaviour as censuring, refusing to converse with, or reproaching them, for their weakness; but using kind and gentle methods, designing rather to inform than discourage them; while at the same time, he was far from approving of, or giving countenance to any thing that was sinful in them, or unbecoming the gospel.

*Secondly*, From what has been before said concerning an hypocrite's being one who performs religious duties with a design to be seen of men, as our Saviour says of the Pharisees, that *they love to stand praying in the synagogues, or in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men*, Matth. vi. 6. We may enquire, what may be said in vindication of the prophet Daniel, from the charge of hypocrisy? concerning whom it is said, in Dan. vi. 10. that when Darius had signed a decree prohibiting any one from asking a petition of any god or man, save of the king, he should be cast into the den of lions: *He went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber, towards Jerusalem; he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime*. In answer to this we may observe,

1st, That this was not done to gain the esteem or applause of men, which they are charged with, who are guilty of hypocrisy; but he did it in contempt of that vile decree of the Persian monarch.

2dly, He did it at the peril of his life; and hereby discovered, that he had rather be cast into the den of lions, than give occasion to any to think that he complied with the king in his idolatrous decree.

3dly, Though it is said, that *he prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime*; yet this is not to be understood as though he set open his windows aforetime; so that his praying publicly at this time, was to shew that he was neither ashamed, nor afraid to own his God, whatever it cost him; therefore he was so far from being guilty of hypocrisy, that this is one of the most noble instances of zeal for the worship of the true God, that we find recorded in scripture.

[2.] Hypocrisy is a reigning sin when we boast of the high attainments in gifts or grace, or set too great a value on ourselves, because of the performance of some religious duties, while we neglect others, wherein the principal part of true godliness consists. Thus the Pharisee *paid tithe of mint, annise, and cummin*, while he *omitted the weightier matters of the law; judgment, mercy and faith*, chap. xxiii. 23, 24.

[3.] It farther consists, in exclaiming against, and censuring others, for lesser faults, while we allow of greater in ourselves;

like those whom our Saviour speaks of, who *behold the mote that is in their brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in their own*, Matt. vii. 3, 5. or, according to that proverbial way of speaking, *strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*. These are very fond of exposing the ignorance of others; though they have no experimental, saving knowledge of divine truth in themselves; or they are very forward, to blame the coldness and lukewarmness which they see in some, while at the same time, that zeal which they express in their whole conduct, is rather to advance themselves, than the glory of God.

[4.] When persons make a gain of godliness, 1 Tim. vi. 5. or of their pretensions to it. Thus Balaam prophesied for a reward; and accordingly it is said, *that he loved the wages of unrighteousness*, 2 Pet. i. 15.

5. When persons make a profession of religion, because it is uppermost, and are ready to despise and cast it off, when it is reproached, or they are like to suffer for it. Thus the Pharisees, how much soever they seemed to embrace Christ, when attending on John's ministry; yet afterwards, when they saw that this was contrary to their secular interest, they were *offended in him*, and prejudiced against him; and therefore they say, *Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him*, John vii. 48.

This sin of hypocrisy, which is a practical lie, has a tendency to corrupt and vitiate all our pretensions to religion. It is like the *dead flie*, mentioned by Solomon, *that causeth the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour*, Eccl. x. 1. and it will, in the end, bring on those who are guilty of it, many sore judgments; some of which are spiritual. Thus it is said of the Heathen, *that because, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, and did not like to retain him in their knowledge; he gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient, &c.* Rom. i. 21, 22, 28. And as for the false hope, and vain confidence, which the hypocrite entertains, this shall leave him in despair and confusion, Job viii. 13,—15. and be attended with unspeakable horror of conscience, chap. xxvii. 18. Isa. xxxiii. 14. Upon which account such are said to *heap up wrath*, and bring on themselves a greater degree of condemnation than others, Job xxxvi. 13. Matt. xxiii. 14. Thus we have considered this Commandment as broken by speaking or acting that which is contrary, or prejudicial, to truth; which leads us,

II. To consider it as forbidding our doing that which is injurious to our neighbour's good name, either by words or actions; and this is done two ways, either before his face, or behind his back.

1. Doing injury to another, by speaking against him, before



his face. It is true, we give him hereby the liberty of vindicating himself. Nevertheless, if the thing be false, which is alleged against him, proceeding from malice and envy, it is a crime of a very heinous nature; and this is done,

(1.) By those, who, in courts of judicature, commence; and carry on malicious prosecutions, in which the plaintiff, the witness, the advocate that manages the cause, the jury that bring in a false verdict, and the judge that passes sentence contrary to law, or evidence, as well as the dictates of his own conscience, with a design to crush and ruin him, who is maliciously prosecuted; these are all notoriously guilty of the breach of this Commandment.

(2.) They may be said to do that which is injurious to our neighbour's good name, who reproach them in common conversation; which is a sin too much committed in this licentious age, as though men were not accountable to God for what they speak, as well as other parts of the conduct of life. There are several things which persons make the subject of their reproach, viz.

[1.] The defect and blemishes of nature; such as lameness, blindness, deafness, impediment of speech, meanness of capacity, or actions, which proceed from a degree of distraction. Thus many suppose that the apostle Paul was reproached for some natural deformity in his body, or impediment in his speech, which is inferred from what he says, when he represents some as speaking to this purpose; *His letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible*, 2 Cor. x. 10. And elsewhere, he commends the Galatians for not despising him on this account; *My temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus*, Gal. iv. 14.

Here we may take occasion to speak something of the childrens sin, who reproached Elisha for his baldness, and the punishment that ensued upon it; namely, his *cursing them in the name of the Lord*; and *two and forty* of them being *torn in pieces by two she-bears out of the wood*, in 2 Kings ii. 23, 24. It may be enquired, by some, whether this was not too great an instance of passion in that holy man, and too severe a punishment inflicted; inasmuch as they who reproached him, are called *little children*. To this it may be answered,

1st, That the children were not so little, as not to be able to know their right hand from their left, or to discern between good and evil; for such are not usually trusted out of their parents sight; nor would they have gathered themselves together in a body, or went some distance from the city, on purpose to insult the prophet, as it is plain they did, under-

stand that he was to come there at that time. This argues that they were boys of sufficient age, to commit the most presumptuous sin; and therefore not too young to suffer such a punishment as ensued thereupon.

*2dly*, Their sin was great, in that they mocked a grave old man, who ought to have been honoured for his age, and a prophet, whom they should have esteemed for his character; and in despising him, they despised God, that called and sent him.

*3dly*, Bethel, where they lived, was the chief seat of idolatry, in which these children had been trained up; and it was a prevailing inclination to it, together with an hatred of the true religion, that occasioned their reproaching and casting contempt on the prophet.

*4thly*, The manner of expression argues a great deal of profaneness, *Go up thou bald head*; that is, either go up to Bethel, speaking in an insulting way, as though they should say, You may go there, but you will not be regarded by them; for they value no such men as you are; or rather, it is as though they should say, you pretend that your predecessor Elijah is gone up to heaven, do you go up after him, that you may trouble us no longer with your prophecies; so that those children, though young in years, were hardened in sin; and this was not so much an occasional mocking of the prophet for his baldness, as a public contrivance, and tumultuous opposition to his ministry; which is a very great crime, and accordingly, was attended with a just resentment in the prophet, and that punishment which was inflicted as the consequence thereof.

The aggravations of this sin of reproaching persons for their natural infirmities, are very great. For, it is a finding fault with the workmanship of the God of nature, the thinking meanly of a person for that which is not chargeable on him as a crime, and which he can, by no means redress. It is a censuring those who are, in some respects, objects of compassion; especially if the reproach be levelled against the defects of the mind, or any degree of distraction; and it argues a great deal of pride and unthankfulness to God, for those natural endowments which we have received from him, though we do not improve them to his glory.

[2.] Some reproach persons for their sinful infirmities, and that in such a way, as that they are styled *fools*, who *make a mock of sin*, Prov. xiv. 9. This is done,

*1st*, When we reflect on persons for sins committed before their conversion, which they have repented of, and God has forgiven; and accordingly they should not be now charged against them, as a matter of reproach. Thus the Pharisee reproached the poor penitent woman, who stood weeping at



our Saviour's feet, and said within himself; *If this man were a prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner*, Luke vii. 37,—39. which respected not her present, but her former condition.

2dly, When they reproach them with levity of spirit, for the sins they are guilty of at present; as when the shameful actions of a drunken man are made the subject of laughter; which ought not to be thought of without regret or pity.

*Object.* To this it may be objected, that sin renders a person vile, and is really a reproach to him; and therefore it may be charged upon him as such; especially since it is said, concerning the righteous man; *in his eyes a vile person is contemned*, Psal. xv. 4.

*Answ.* We are far from asserting, that it is a sin to reprove sin, and shew the person who commits it his vileness, and the reason he has to reproach and charge himself with it, and loath himself for it; therefore,

1st, The contempt that is to be cast on a vile person, does not consist in making him the subject of laughter, as though it was a light matter for him thus to dishonour God as he does; for this should occasion grief in all true believers, as the Psalmist says, *I beheld the transgressors and was grieved; because they kept not thy word*, Psal. cxix. 158. But,

2dly, When the Psalmist advises to *contemn* such an one, the meaning is, that we should not make him our intimate, or bosom-friend; or if he be in advanced circumstances, in the world, we are not to flatter him in his sin; whereby, especially when it is public, he forfeits that respect which would otherwise be due to him. In this sense we are to understand Mordecai's contempt of Haman, Esther iii. 2.

Here we may take occasion to distinguish, between reprov-  
ing sin, and reproaching persons for it; the former of these is to be done with sorrow of heart, and compassion expressed to the sinner; as our Saviour reprov'd Jerusalem, and, at the same time, *wept over it*, Luke xix. 41, 42. But, on the other hand, reproach is attended with hatred of, and a secret pleasure taken in his sin and ruin. Again, reproof for sin ought to be with a design to reclaim the offender; whereas reproach tends only to expose, exasperate, and harden him in his sin. Moreover, reproof for sin ought to be given with the greatest seriousness and conviction of the evil and danger ensuing hereupon; whereas they who reproach persons, charge sin on them, as being induced hereunto by their own passions, without any concern for the dishonour which they bring to God and religion hereby, or desire of their repentance and reformation.

[3.] Sometimes that which is the highest ornament, and

greatest excellency of a Christian, is turned to his reproach ; more particularly,

*1st*, Some have been reproached for extraordinary gifts, which God has been pleased to confer on them. Thus the spirit of prophecy was sometimes reckoned, by profane persons, the effect of distraction, 2 Kings ix. 11. And Joseph was reproached by his brethren, in a taunting way, with the character of a dreamer ; because of the prophetic intimation which he had from God, in a dream, concerning the future estate of his family, Gen. xxxvii. 13. And when the apostles were favoured with the extraordinary gift of tongues, and preached to men of different nations, in their own language ; *Some were amazed, and others mocked them, and said, These men are full of new wine*, Acts ii. 13.

*2dly*, Raised affections, and extraordinary instances of zeal for the glory of God, have been derided as though they were matter of reproach. Thus Michael reproached David, when he *danced before the ark*, 2 Sam. vi. 20. being induced hereunto by an holy zeal, and transport of joy on this occasion ; though he was so far from reckoning it a reproach, that he counted that which she called vile, glorious.

*3dly*, Spiritual experiences of the grace of God, have, sometimes, been turned by those who are strangers to them to their reproach and termed no other than madness. Thus when the apostle Paul related the gracious dealings of God with him in his first conversion, Festus charged him with being *beside himself*, Acts xxvi. 24.

*4thly*, A person's being made use of by God, to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, has been charged against him, as though it were rebellion. Thus the Jews tell Pilate, when he sought to release Jesus, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend*, John xix. 12. and that reformation which the apostles were instrumental in making in the world, by preaching the gospel, is styled, *turning the world upside down*, Acts xvii. 6.

*5thly*, Humility of mind in owning our weakness, as not being able to comprehend some divine mysteries contained in the gospel, is reckoned matter of reproach by many, who call it implicit faith, and admitting of the greatest absurdities in matters of religion.

*6thly*, Giving glory to the Spirit, as the author of all grace and peace, and desiring to draw nigh to God in prayer, or engage in other holy duties, by his assistance, is reproached by some, as though it were enthusiasm, and they who desire or are favoured with this privilege, were pretenders to extraordinary revelation.

*7thly*, A being conscientious in abstaining from those sins which abound in a licentious age, or reproving and bearing

our testimony against those who are guilty of them, is reproached with the character of hypocrisy, preciseness, and being righteous overmuch.

*8thly*, Separating from communion with a false church, and renouncing those doctrines which tend to pervert the gospel of Christ, is called, by some, heresy. Thus the Papists brand the Protestants with the reproachful name of heretics; to whom we may answer, that this is rather our glory, and confess, that *after the way which they call heresy, so worship we the God of our fathers*, Acts xxiv. 14.

This sin is attended with many aggravations; for God reckons it as a contempt cast on himself, Luke x. 16. and it is a plain intimation, that they who are guilty of it, pretend not to be what they reproach and deride in others, who, if they be in the right way to heaven, these discover that they desire not to come hither. And, in their whole conduct, they act as though they were endeavouring to banish all religion out of the world, by methods of scorn and ridicule; which, if it should take effect, this earth would be but a small degree better than hell.

However, when we are thus reproached for the sake of God and religion, let us not render railing for railing; but look on those who revile us, as objects of pity, 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. 1 Pet. ii. 23, who do more hurt to themselves than they can do to us, thereby. Moreover, let us reflect on our own sins, which provoke God to suffer this; and beg of him that he would turn this reproach to his own glory, and our good. Thus David did, when he was unjustly and barbarously cursed and railed at by Shimei, 2 Sam. xvi. 10—12. We ought also to esteem religion the more, because of the opposition and contempt that it meets with from the enemies of God; which may, indeed, afford us some evidence of the truth and excellency thereof; as our Saviour says concerning his disciples, *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*, John xv. 19.

Again, when we are reviled for the sake of Christ and religion, let us take encouragement from hence, that herein we have the same treatment that he, and all his saints, have met with, Heb. xii. 2, 3. chap. xi. 36. And let us also consider, that there are many promises annexed hereunto, Matt. v. 11, 12. 1 Pet. iv. 14. It is also an advantage to our character, as Christians; for hereby it appears, that we are not on their side, who are Christ's avowed enemies; and therefore we should reckon their reproach our glory, Heb. xi. 26, or, as the apostle says, *Take pleasure in reproaches for Christ's sake*, &

Cor. xii. 10. or, as it is said elsewhere, *Rejoice, that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*, Acts v. 41. Thus concerning our doing injury to our neighbour, by speaking against him before his face. We shall now consider,

2. The injury that is done to others by speaking against them behind their backs. This they are guilty of, who raise or invent false reports of their neighbours, or spread those which ought to be kept secret, with a design to take away their good name; these are called tale-bearers, back-biters, slanderers, who offer injuries to others, that are not in a capacity of defending themselves, Lev. xix. 16. These malicious reports are oftentimes, indeed, prefaced, with a pretence of great respect to the person whom they speak against. They seem very much surprised at, and sorry for what they are going to relate; and sometimes signify their hope, that it may not be true; and desire, that what they report may be concealed, while they make it their business themselves to divulge it. But this method will not secure their own reputation, while they are endeavouring to ruin that of another. This is done various ways;

(1.) By pretending that a person is guilty of a fault which he is innocent of. Thus our Saviour, and John the Baptist were charged with immoral practices, which there was not the least shadow or pretence for, Matt. xi. 18, 19.

(2.) By divulging a real fault which has been acknowledged and repented of, and therefore ought to be concealed, chap. xvii. 15. or when there is no pretence for making it public; but what arises from malice and hatred of the person.

(3.) By aggravating, or presenting faults worse than they are. Thus Absalom's sin in murdering Amnon, was very great; but he that brought tidings thereof to David, represented it worse than it was, when he said, that Absalom had *slain all the king's sons*, 2 Sam. xiii. 30.

(4.) By reporting the bad actions of men, and, at the same time, over-looking and extenuating their good ones, and so not doing them the justice of setting one in the balance against the other.

(5.) By putting the worst and most injurious construction on actions that are really excellent. Thus, because our Saviour admitted Publicans and sinners into his presence, and did them good by his doctrine, the Jews reproached him as though he were a *friend of publicans and sinners*, Matt. xi. 19. taking the word *friend* in the worst sense, as signifying an approver of them.

(6.) By reporting things, to the prejudice of others, which are grounded on such slender evidence, that they themselves

hardly believe them, or, at least, would not, had they not a design to make use thereof, to defame them. Thus Sanballat, in his letter to Nehemiah, tells him, that 'he and the Jews' thought to rebel; and built the wall of Jerusalem, that he 'might be their king,' Neh. vi. 6. which, it can hardly be supposed, that the enemy himself gave any credit to. Thus concerning the instances in which persons back-bite, or raise false reports on others.

And, to this we may add, that as they are guilty who raise them; so are they who listen to, and endeavour to propagate them. It is not, indeed, the bare hearing of a report, which, we cannot but think to be attended with malice and slander, that will render us guilty; for that we may not be able to avoid; but it is our encouraging him that raises or spreads it, which renders us guilty; and, particularly, we sin when we hear malicious reports.

[1.] If we conceal them from the party concerned therein, and so deny him the justice of answering what is said against him, in his own vindication.

[2.] When we do not reprove those who make a practice of slandering and back-biting others, in order to our bringing them to shame and repentance; and, most of all, when we contract an intimacy with those who are guilty of this sin, and are too easy in giving credit to what they say, though not supported by sufficient evidence; but, on the other hand, carrying in it the appearance of envy and resentment. Thus concerning the sins forbidden in this Commandment. We shall close this head by proposing some remedies against it. As,

1st, If the thing, reported to another's prejudice, be true, we ought to consider, that we are not without many faults ourselves; which we would be unwilling, if others knew them, should be divulged. And if it be doubtful, we, by reporting it, may give occasion to some, to believe it to be true, without sufficient evidence, whereby our neighbour will receive real prejudice from that, which, to us, is only matter of surmize and conjecture. But if, on the other hand, what is reported be apparently false, the sin is still the greater; and the highest injustice is hereby offered to the innocent, while we, at the same time, are guilty of a known and presumptuous sin, by inventing and propagating it.

2dly, Such a way of exposing men answers no good end; nor is it a means of reclaiming them.

3dly, Hereby we lay ourselves open to the censure of others, and by endeavouring to take away our neighbour's good name, endanger the loss of our own.

**QUEST. CXLVI.** *Which is the tenth Commandment?*

**ANSW.** The tenth Commandment is, [*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*]

**QUEST. CXLVII.** *What are the duties required in the tenth Commandment?*

**ANSW.** The duties required in the tenth Commandment are, such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul toward our neighbour, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him tend unto and further all that good which is his.

**QUEST. CXLVIII.** *What are the sins forbidden in the tenth Commandment?*

**ANSW.** The sins forbidden in the tenth Commandment, are, discontent with our own estate; envying, and grieving at the good of our neighbours, together with all inordinate motions and affections to any thing that is his.

**T**HE general design of this commandment, is, to regulate and set bounds to our desires; and it contains a prohibition of coveting those things, that belong not to us. It is not to be split into two Commandments, as the Papists pretend; supposing that, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house*, is the ninth, and, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, &c.* is the tenth Commandment; since these are only particular instances of the breach of the same Commandment, and the argument taken from the repetition of the words, *Thou shalt not covet*, is so very weak and inconclusive, that it would hardly have been made use of by them, had they not thought it necessary, some way or other, to make up the number ten; having as was observed, under a foregoing head, determined the second Commandment, not to be distinct from, but an appendix to the first\*. But passing this by, we proceed to consider,

I. The duties required therein, which may be reduced to two heads;

1. Contentment with our own condition; by which we are not to understand that we are to give way to indolence or stupidity, but to exercise a composure of mind, acquiescing in the divine dispensations in every condition of life. Thus the apostle says, *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith*

\* See Page 509.



to be content, Phil. iv. 11. And this being applicable to all sorts of men, we may consider it,

(1.) As a grace that is to be exercised by those who are in prosperous circumstances in the world. Thus the apostle says, *I know how to abound*, ver. 12. and to be *full*, as well as to *suffer need*. We often find, that they who have the greatest share of the good things of this world, are so far from being satisfied with it, that their covetousness increaseth in proportion to their substance. But such ought to consider, that this is most unreasonable and ungrateful; and may justly provoke God to take away the blessing which he has given them, or add some circumstances thereunto, that will tend to embitter them; and it is a giving way to such a temper of mind as renders them really miserable in the midst of their abundance. But that which we shall principally consider, is,

(2.) How this grace of contentment is to be exercised by those who are in an afflicted state, together with the motives and inducements leading thereunto. And,

[1.] We will suppose persons under bodily weakness or pain, which tends much to embitter the comforts of life, by which means they are made uneasy; and, indeed, it is impossible, from the nature of the thing, for them not to complain, or groan under the burdens that are laid on them, as the Psalmist did, who speaks of himself as *weary of his groaning*; Psal. vi. 6. nor is it unlawful, provided they do not repine at, or find fault with, the methods of God's providence, in his dealing with them. Nevertheless there are some things that may induce them to be contented.

1st, When they consider, that the body gave occasion to the first entrance of sin into the world, and bears a part with the soul in all the sins committed, and guilt contracted thereby. It is therefore no wonder, when we find that it has its share in those miseries that attend it.

2dly, Bodily diseases are our monitors, to put us in mind of the frailty of our present state; and therefore, since they are the harbingers of death, we are hereby forewarned, to prepare for it, as making sensible advances towards it.

3dly, The greatest pains that we are liable to, are far short of what Christ endured for us; in which respect our afflictions are comparatively light, and a convincing proof, that they are not certain indications of our being rejected by God, Eccl. ix. 1.

4thly, As God will not lay more on us than he will enable us to bear; so none of these afflictive dispensations shall have a tendency to separate the soul from Christ. Though we sometimes complain that this is a great interruption to the exercise of grace; yet this shall not be charged upon us as

our fault, any otherwise than as it is the effect of that sin, which is the procuring cause of all affliction.

*5thly*, The heavier our afflictions are at present, the more sweet and comfortable the heavenly rest will be, to those who have a well-grounded hope that they shall be brought to it, Job iii. 17. 2 Thess. i. 7. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

[2.] If our condition be low and poor in the world, we are not without some inducements to be content. For,

*1st*, Poverty is not, in itself, a curse, or inconsistent with the love of God, since Christ himself submitted to it, 2 Cor. viii. 9. Matt. viii. 20. and his best saints have been exposed to it, and glorified God, more than others, under it, 2 Cor. vi. 10.

*2dly*, How poor soever we are, we have more than we brought into the world with us, or than the richest person can carry out of it, Job i. 21.

*3dly*, They who have least of the world, have more than they deserve, or than God was under any obligation to give them.

[3.] Suppose we are afflicted in our good name, and do not meet with that love and esteem from the world, which might be expected; but, on the other hand, are censured, reproached, and hated by those with whom we converse. This should not make us, beyond measure, uneasy. For,

*1st*, We have reason to conclude, that the esteem of the world is precarious and uncertain; and they who most deserve it, have oftentimes the least of it. Thus our Saviour was one day followed with the caresses of the multitude, shouting forth their hosannah's to him; and the next day the common cry was, crucify him, crucify him. And when the apostle Paul and Barnabas, had healed the cripple at Lystra, they could, at first, hardly restrain the people from offering sacrifice to them; but afterwards they joined with the malicious Jews in stoning them, Acts xiv. 18, 19. And Paul tells the Galatians, that 'if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their eyes, and have given them to him;' but a little after this, he complains that he was 'become their enemy, because he told them the truth,' Gal. iv. 15, 16.

*2dly*, The esteem of men is no farther to be desired, than as it may render us useful to them; and if God is pleased to deny this to us, we are not to prescribe to him, what measure of respect he shall allot to us from the world, or usefulness in it.

*3dly*, Let us consider, that we know more evil abounding in our own hearts than others can charge us with. Therefore, how much soever they are guilty of injustice to us; yet this affords us a motive to contentment. Besides we have not



brought that honour to God that we ought; therefore, how just is it for him to deny us that esteem from men which we desire?

[4.] Suppose we are afflicted in our relations; there are some motives to contentment. Thus if servants have masters who make their lives uncomfortable, by their unreasonable demands, or unjust severity, such ought to consider, that their faithfulness and industry will be approved of, by God, how much soever it may be disregarded, by men; and a conscientious discharge of the duties incumbent on them, in the relation in which they stand, will give them ground to expect a blessing from God, to whom they are herein said to do service, which shall not go unrewarded, Eph. vi. 7, 8.

On the other hand, if masters are afflicted, by reason of the stubborn and unfaithful behaviour, or sloth and negligence, of their servants; let them enquire, whether this be not the consequence of their not being so much concerned for their spiritual welfare as they ought, or keeping up strict religion in their families? or, whether they have not been more concerned that their servants should obey them, than their great master, which is in heaven?

Again, if parents have undutiful children, which are a grief of heart to them; let them consider, as a motive to contentment, whether they have not formerly neglected their duty to their parents, slighted their counsels, or disregarded their reproofs? so whether they have not reason to charge themselves with the iniquity of their youth? and enquire, whether God be not, herein, writing bitter things against them for it? or, whether they have not neglected to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? These considerations will fence against all repining thoughts at the providence of God, that has brought these troubles upon them. And, as a farther inducement to make them easy, let such consider, that if this does not altogether lie at their door, but, they have been faithful to their children, in praying for, and instructing them, God may hear their prayers, and set home their instructions on their hearts, when they themselves are removed out of the world.

On the other hand, if children have wicked parents, whose conversation fills them with great uneasiness; let such consider, that this has been the case of many of God's faithful servants; such as Hezekiah, Josiah, and others; and they may be assured, that they shall have no occasion to use that proverb, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,' Ezek. xviii. 2.

[5.] If we are afflicted, by reason of the treachery and unfaithfulness of pretended friends, which wound us in the most

tender part, Psal. lv. 12, 13. we may be induced to be content. For,

1st, We have no ground to expect perfection in the best of men, nor that their love and favour is immutable; neither is our conduct always such, that we do not often forfeit the respect, which we once had from others.

2dly, -If our friends deal deceitfully with us, or are unfaithful to us, without just ground; this is not without the permission of the wise and over-ruling providence of God, who, sometimes, orders it to take us off from a dependence upon men, or expecting too much happiness from them; which is to be sought for only in himself, Isa. ii. 22.

3dly, This is our encouragement, when we find a change in the behaviour of friends towards us, that our chief happiness consists in the unchangeable love of God, Mal. iii. 6.

[6.] When we are afflicted in the loss of friends, or near relations; let us consider, as a motive to contentment,

1st, That there is no reversing or altering the decree of God, which fixes the bounds of men's continuance in this world, Job xiv. 9.

2dly, All the comfort we have in friends and relations is a peculiar blessing from God; and he sometimes afflicts us in the loss of them, that he may draw off our affections from the best creature-enjoyments, and we may take up our rest intirely in himself. Moreover, we had never any reason to look on our friends as immortal, any more than ourselves; and therefore ought to say as David did when he lost his child, *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me*, 2 Sam. xii. 23. and so far as self-love is concerned herein, we have reason to give a check to the excess thereof, by the exercise of self-denial, and say with David, *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it*, Psal. xxxix. 8. or follow the example of Aaron, concerning whom it is said, that, when he lost two of his sons at once, by a public and awful stroke of divine justice, *he held his peace*, Lev. x. 3.

[7.] If we are afflicted by the want of success, or the many disappointments that attend us, in our lawful callings, in the world, we have reason, notwithstanding, to be content, if we consider,

1st, That it is the sovereign hand of God that orders our condition therein, as to what respects the success or disappointments that attend it; therefore we are not to strive against our Maker, or find fault with his will, who may do what he pleases with his own.

2dly, A man's happiness does not really consist in the abundance of what he possesses, Luke xii. 15. but rather in his having a heart to use it aright; therefore we ought to say to

ourselves, as God did to Baruch, *Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not*, Jer. xlv. 5.

*3dly*, The world is a scene of vanity; we have no reason to expect too much from it; and therefore ought not to be dejected at the loss of it; especially considering that such disappointments are the common lot of all sorts of men.

*4thly*, The providence of God sometimes denies us the good things of this world, that we may think it our duty and interest to lay up treasures in heaven.

[8.] Suppose we meet with afflictions, as to what relates to our spiritual concerns, as being under divine desertion, or decays of grace, or want of a sense of the love of God, or those spiritual comforts, which we once enjoyed from him; in this condition no believer can or ought to be easy, at least, stupid and unconcerned about it; but, on the other hand, he ought to be humbled for those sins which may give occasion to it, and press after the enjoyment of what he is, at present, deprived of: Nevertheless, contentment, as it is opposed to repining or quarrelling with God, is his present duty; and there are some inducements tending thereunto; as,

*1st*, A person may have the truth of grace, when he is destitute of the comfortable sense thereof.

*2dly*, There are some great and precious promises made to believers, in this condition, Isa. liv. 7, 8. Psal. cxii. 4.

*3dly*, God has wise ends in this dispensation; for hereby he brings sin to remembrance, humbles us for it, fences against presumption and confidence in our own strength, Psal. xxx. 6, 7. He also puts us upon the exercise of suitable graces, Psal. xlii. 6. and lxxvii. 6. and when he is pleased to comfort us after such afflictions, we are better furnished to comfort others in the like case.

2. The next thing required in this Commandment, is, a charitable frame of spirit towards our neighbour; so that all our inward motions and affections should lead us to promote and rejoice in his good, 1 Cor, xiii. 4,—7. This charitable frame of spirit ought to be exercised,

(1.) Towards those who excel us in gifts or graces: These they receive from the hand of providence, as talents to be improved; and therefore, if they have a greater share thereof than ourselves, more is required of them in proportion thereunto, Luke xii. 48. If they excel us in grace, we ought rather to rejoice, that though we bring but little glory to God, others bring more; and it will afford us an evidence of the truth of grace, if, while we are humbled under a sense of our own defects, we are thankful for the honour that is brought to God by others, Gal. i. 23, 24. John iii. 26, 27, 28, 30.

(2.) We ought to exercise a charitable frame of spirit towards those who are in more prosperous circumstances in the world; not envying, grieving, or repining at the providence of God, because their condition therein is better than ours. We are therefore to consider, that the most flourishing and prosperous condition in the world, is not always the best, Psal. xxxvii. 16. nor is it without many temptations that often attend it, 1 Tim. vi. 9. and if it be not improved to the glory of God, this will bring a greater weight of guilt on their consciences: Whereas, on the other hand, if we enjoy communion with him, and the blessings of the upper springs, this is much more desirable than the most prosperous condition in the world, without it, Psal. xvi. 5, 6. This leads us to consider.

II. The sins forbidden in this Commandment. And these include in them, that corrupt fountain from whence the irregularity of our desires proceeds; or the streams that flow from it, which discover themselves in the lusts of concupiscence in various instances, as well as in our being discontented with our own estate.

1. As to the former of these, to wit, the corruption of nature; this must be considered as contrary to the law of God, and consequently forbidden in this Commandment. The Pelagians and Papists, indeed, pretend that the law of God only respects the corruption of our actions which is to be checked and restrained thereby; and not the internal habits or principle from whence they proceed; accordingly they take an estimate hereof from human laws, which only respect the overt acts of sin, and not those internal inclinations and dispositions which persons have to commit it: But when we speak of the divine laws, we must not take our plan from thence; for though man can only judge of outward actions, God judgeth the heart; and therefore that sin which reigns there, cannot but be, in the highest degree, offensive to him; and though the corruption of our nature cannot be altogether prevented or extirpated, by any prescription in the divine law; yet, this is the means which God takes, to reprove and humble us for it, Rom. vii. 9.

*Object.* It is objected that the apostle James, in chap. i. 15. distinguishes between lust and sin; *when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin*; therefore the corruption of nature is not properly sin; and, consequently not forbidden by the law.

*Answer.* To this it may be replied; that lust may be distinguished from sin, as the habit or corrupt principle is from the act which it produces; and therefore, the apostle's meaning in this scripture is, that lust, or irregular desires, are first conceiv-

ed in the heart; and then actual sins proceed from them in the life; and both of them are abhorred by God, and contrary to his law: And they seem to be forbidden, in particular, in this tenth Commandment.

Here we may observe the various methods that corrupt nature takes, in order to its producing and bringing forth sinful actions. First, the temptation is offered, either by Satan; or the world, with a specious pretence of some advantage which may arise from our compliance with it; and, at the same time we consider not whether it be lawful or unlawful; and regard not the threatnings that should deter us from it. And, we sometimes take occasion, from the pernicious examples of the falls and miscarriages of others, to venture on the commission of the same sins; pretending that they are, many of them, more acquainted with scripture, than we are; and there seems to be no ill consequence attending their commission of those sins: therefore, why may we not give way to them? And also, that many, who have had more fortitude and resolution than we can pretend to, have been overcome by the same temptations; therefore it is in vain for us to strive against them.

Again; corrupt nature sometimes fills the soul with a secret dislike of the strictness and purity of the law of God; and, at other times, it suggests that there are some dispensations allowed, in compliance with the frailty of nature; and therefore, we may venture on the commission of some sins; At length we take up a resolution that we will try the experiment, whatever be the consequence thereof. Thus lust brings forth sin; which, after it has been, for some time indulged, is committed with greediness, and persisted in with resolution; and, in the end, brings forth death. And this leads us to consider,

2. The irregularity of those actions, which proceed from the corruption of our nature, which are sometimes, called the lusts of concupiscence; whereby, without the least shew of justice, we endeavour to possess ourselves of those things which belong to our neighbour. Thus Ahab was restless in his own spirit, till he had got Naboth's vineyard into his hand; and, in order thereto, joined in a conspiracy, to take away his life, 1 Kings xxi. 4. And David coveted his neighbour's wife; which was one of the greatest blemishes in his life, and brought with it a long train of miseries, that attended him in the following part of his reign, 2 Sam. xii. 9—12. And Achan coveted those goods which belonged not to him, the *wedge of gold*, and the *Babylonish garment*, Josh. vii. 21. which sin proved his ruin.

This sin of covetousness arises from a being discontented with our present condition, so that whatever measure of the

blessings of providence we enjoy, we are notwithstanding filled with disquietude of mind, because we are destitute of what we are lusting after. This must be considered as a sin that is attended with very great aggravations. For,

(1.) It unfits us for the performance of holy duties; prevents the exercise of those graces, which are necessary in order thereunto; and, on the other hand, exposes us to manifold temptations, whereby we are rendered an easy prey to our spiritual enemies.

(2.) It is altogether unlike the temper of the blessed Jesus, who expressed an entire resignation to the divine will, under the greatest sufferings, John xviii. 11. Luke xxi. 42. And, indeed, it is a very great reproach to religion, in general, and a discouragement to those who are setting their faces towards it, who will be ready to conclude, from our example, that the consolations of God are small, or that there is not enough in the promises of the covenant of grace, to quiet our spirits under their present uneasiness.

(3.) It is to act as though we expected, or desired our portion in this world, or looked no farther than these present things; which is contrary to the practice of the best of God's saints, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

(4.) It tends to cast the utmost contempt on the many mercies we have received or enjoy, at present, which are, as it were, forgotten in unthankfulness; and it is a setting aside those blessings which the gospel gives us to expect.

(5.) It argues an unwillingness to be at God's disposal, and a leaning to our own understandings, as though we knew better than him, what was most conducive to our present and future happiness; and therefore, it is a tempting God, and grieving his Holy Spirit, which has a tendency to provoke him to *turn to be our enemy, and fight against us*, Isa. lxiii. 10.

(6.) It deprives us of the present sweetness of other mercies; renders every providence, in our apprehension, afflictive; and those burdens which would otherwise be light, almost insupportable.

(7.) If God is pleased to give us what we were discontented and uneasy for the want of, he often sends some great affliction with it: Thus Rachel, in a discontented frame, says, *Give me children, or else I die*, Gen. xxx. 1. she had, indeed, in some respects, her desire of children; but died in travail with one of them, chap. xxxv. 19.

(8.) It is a sin, which they, who are guilty of, will find it very difficult to be brought to a thorough conviction of the guilt which they contract hereby, or a true repentance for it: Thus Jonah, when under a discontented and uneasy frame of spirit, justified himself, and, as it were, defied God to do his



worst against him ; so that when this matter was charged upon his conscience ; *Dost thou well to be angry ?* he replied, in a very insolent manner, *I do well to be angry, even unto death,* Jonah iv. 9. The justifying ourselves under such a frame of spirit, cannot but be highly provoking to God ; and whatever we may be prone to allege in our own behalf, will rather aggravate, than extenuate the crime.

There are several things which a discontented person is apt to allege in his own vindication, which have a tendency only to enhance his guilt. As,

[1.] When he pretends that his natural temper leads him to be uneasy, so that he cannot, by any means, subdue his passions, or submit to the disposing providence of God.

To which it may be replied ; that the corruption of our nature, and its proneness to sin, is no just excuse for, but rather an aggravation of it ; whereby it appears to be more deeply rooted in our hearts ; and, indeed, our natural inclinations to any sin are increased, by indulging it. Therefore, in this case, we ought rather to be importunate with God, for that grace which may have a tendency to restrain the inordinacy of our affections, and render us willing to acquiesce in the divine dispensations, than to palliate and excuse our sin ; which only aggravates the guilt thereof.

[2.] Some, in excuse for their discontented and uneasy frame of spirit, allege ; that the injuries which have been offered to them, ought to be resented, that they are such as they are not able to bear ; and not to show themselves uneasy under them, would be to encourage persons to insult and trample on them.

But to this it may be replied ; that while we complain of injuries done us by men, and are prone to meditate revenge against them, we do not consider the great dishonour that we bring to God, and how much we deserve to be made the monuments of his fury, so that we should not obtain forgiveness from him, who are so prone to resent lesser injuries done to us by our fellow-creatures, Matt. xviii. 23. & seq.

[3.] Others excuse their discontent, by alleging the greatness of their afflictions ; that their burden is almost insupportable, so that they are pressed out of measure, above strength, and are ready to say with Job, *Even to day is my complaint bitter ; my stroke is heavier than my groaning,* Job xxiii. 2.

But to this it may be replied ; that our afflictions are not so great as our sins, which are the procuring cause thereof ; nor are they greater than some that befall others, who are better than ourselves ; and, indeed, by indulging a discontented frame of spirit, we render them heavier than they would otherwise be.

[4.] Some pretend, that they are discontented and uneasy because the affliction they are under, was altogether unexpected; and therefore they were unprovided for, and so less able to bear it. To this it may be replied;

1st, That a Christian ought daily to expect afflictions in this miserable and sinful world, at least, so far as not to be unprovided for, or think it strange that he should be exercised with them, 1 Pet. iv. 12.

2dly, We have received many unlooked for mercies; and therefore, why should we be uneasy because we meet with unexpected afflictions, and not rather set the one against the other.

4thly, Some of God's best children have oftentimes been surprized with afflictive providences, and yet have been enabled to exercise contentment under them. Thus the messengers who brought Job heavy and unexpected tidings of one affliction immediately following another, Job i. 13, & seq. did not overthrow his faith, or make him discontented under the hand of God; for, notwithstanding all this, he *worshipped and blessed the name of the Lord*, ver. 20, 21.

[5.] Others allege, that the change which is made in their circumstances in the world, from a prosperous to an afflicted condition of life, is so great, and lies with such weight upon their spirits, that it is impossible for them to be easy under it. But to this it may be answered,

1st, That when God gave us the good things we are deprived of, he reserved to himself the liberty of, taking them away when he pleased, as designing hereby, to shew his absolute sovereignty over us; and therefore, before this affliction befel us, it was our duty, according to the apostle's advice, to *rejoice as though we rejoiced not*, and to *use the world as not abusing it*, 1 Cor. vii. 30. and not to think it strange, that we should be deprived of it, inasmuch as *the fashion thereof passeth away*.

2dly, The greater variety of conditions in which we have been, or are, in the world, afford more abundant experience of those dealings of God with us, which are designed as an ordinance for our faith; and therefore, instead of being discontented under them, we ought rather to be put hereupon, on the exercise of those graces that are suitable to the change of our condition, as the apostle says, *I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound*, Phil. iv. 12.

[6.] Some allege, that they have the greatest reason to be discontented, because of the influence which their afflictions have on their spiritual concerns, as they tend to interrupt their communion with God; and they are often ready to fear, that these are indications of his wrath, and, as it were, the begin-



ning of sorrows; which leads them to the very brink of despair.

To this it may be replied; that it is certain nothing more sharpens the edge of afflictions, or has a greater tendency to make us uneasy under them, than such thoughts as these; and not to be sensible hereof, would be an instance of the greatest stupidity; yet let us consider,

1st, That if our fears are ill-grounded, as they sometimes are, the uneasiness that arises from them is unwarrantable.

2dly, If we have too much ground for them, we are to make use of the remedy that God has provided; accordingly we are to have recourse by faith, to the blood of Jesus, for forgiveness; and this ought to be accompanied with the exercise of true repentance, and godly sorrow for sin, without giving way to those despairing apprehensions, that sometimes arise from a sense of the greatness of the guilt thereof, as though it set us out of the reach of mercy; which will add an insupportable weight to our burden; and,

3dly, If under the afflicting hand of God, we are rendered unfit for holy duties, and have no communion with him therein; this may be owing, not to the affliction, but that discontented, uneasy frame of spirit which we too much indulge under it. Therefore we are not to allege this as an excuse for that murmuring, repining frame of spirit which we are too apt to discover while exercised therewith.

The last thing to be considered is, the remedies against this sin of being discontented with our present condition; and these are,

1st, A due sense of that undoubted right which God has to dispose of us, and our condition in this world, as he pleases; inasmuch as we are his own, Matt. xx. 15.

2dly, Uneasiness under the hand of God, or repining at his dealings, when he thinks fit to deprive us of the blessings we once enjoyed, is not the way to recover the possession of them; but the best expedient for us to regain them, or some other blessings that are more than an equivalent for them, is our exercising an entire resignation to the will of God, and concluding that all his dispensations are holy, just, and good.

3dly, Let us consider, that God oftentimes designs to make us better by the sharpest trials, which are an ordinance to bring us nearer to himself. Thus David says, *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word*, Psal. cxix. 67.

4thly, We ought to consider that God's design in these dispensations is, to try our faith, and that it may be found afterwards unto praise, honour, and glory, as it will be, with res-

pect to every true believer, *at the appearing of Jesus Christ.* 1 Pet. i. 7. And to this we may add,

*5thly*, That there are many promises of the presence of God, which have not only a tendency to afford relief against uneasiness or dejection of spirit; but to give us the greatest encouragement under the sorest afflictions; particularly, that comprehensive promise, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,* Heb. xiii. 5.

**QUEST. CXLIX.** *Is any man able perfectly to keep the Commandments of God?*

**ANSW.** No man is able, either in himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the Commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.

**H**AVING considered man's duty and obligation to keep the Commandments of God; we are now led to speak of him as unable to keep them; and, on the other hand, chargeable with the daily breach thereof, which is an argument of the imperfection of this present state. We have, under a foregoing answer\*, endeavoured to prove that the work of sanctification is imperfect in this life; so that all the boasts of the Pelagians, and others, who defend the possibility of attaining perfection therein, are vain and unwarrantable. We have also considered the reasons why God orders that it should be so. And therefore we shall, without enlarging so much on this subject, as otherwise we might have done, principally take notice of what is to be observed in this answer, under two general heads.

I. In what respects, and with what limitations, man is said to be unable to keep the Commandments of God; and, accordingly it is said, that no man is able, perfectly, to keep them. By which we are to understand, as it is observed in the Shorter Catechism†, no mere man, whereby our Saviour is excepted, who yielded perfect obedience in our nature. This is farther explained, with another limitation, namely, that no man is able to do this since the fall; to denote that man, in his state of innocency, was able, perfectly to keep the Commandments of God. For he was made upright, and had the image of God instamped on his soul; which consisted in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, Eccl. vii. 29. Gen. i. 27. having the law of God written in his heart, and power to fulfil it‡. And, indeed, to suppose the contrary, would be a

\* See Quest. LXXVIII. Vol. III. No.

† See Vol. II. 44.

‡ See Quest. LXXVIII.

reflection upon the divine government, and would argue man to have been created under a natural necessity of sinning, and perishing; which is contrary to the goodness, holiness, and justice of God. It is farther observed, that no man is able, in this life, thus to keep God's Commandments, which contains an intimation that the glorified saints, in heaven, will be enabled to yield perfect obedience; notwithstanding the many imperfections they are now liable to. Moreover, as man is not able, of himself, or without the aids of divine grace, to obey God; so he is not to expect such assistance from him as shall enable him to obey him perfectly. There is no doubt but the grace of God could free us from all the remainders of sin in this world, as well as in our passing from it to heaven: but we have no ground to conclude that it will. For,

1. *The whole creation* is liable to the curse, (a) (which was consequent upon man's first apostasy from God,) under which it *groaneth*, unto this day, Rom. viii. 22, 23. and shall not be delivered from it, till the scene of time, and things shall be changed, and the saints shall be fully possessed of what they are now waiting for, to wit, the *adoption*, or the *redemption of their bodies*.

2. God is pleased to deny his people that perfection of holiness here, which they shall attain to hereafter, that he may give them daily occasion to exercise the duties of self-denial, mortification of sin, faith, and repentance, which redound to his own glory, and their spiritual advantage. This leads us,

II. To consider that we daily break the Commandments of God, in thought, word, and deed.

1. In thought; to wit, when the mind is conversant about sinful objects, in such away, as that it contracts defilement. It is a sign that the wickedness of man is very great, when, *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil, and that continually*, Gen. vi. 5. Now the sinfulness of the thoughts of men, consists in four things;

(1.) When they chuse, delight in, and are daily conversant about things that are vain, empty of what is good, and have no tendency to the glory of God, or the spiritual advantage either of ourselves or others. The least vain thought which contains an excursion from our duty to God, brings some degree of guilt with it; but when the mind is wholly taken up with vanity, so that it is turned aside from, or takes no delight in those things that are of the highest importance, this will have a tendency to vitiate the mind, and alienate it from the life of God.

(2.) The thoughts of men may be said to be sinful, when

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(a) *Khor* these mean the animal part of man.

they are not fixed, or intensely set, on God and divine things, when engaged in holy duties; and that either, when worldly cares or business, how lawful soever they may be at other times, have a tendency to divert our thoughts from them, being altogether inconsistent therewith. Or when our minds are conversant about spiritual things unseasonably, so as to be diverted from our present design; as, when we are joining with others in prayer, instead of bearing a part with them, in having the same exercise of faith, and other graces, which supposes that our thoughts are employed about the same object with theirs, we are meditating on some other divine subject, foreign to the present occasion.

(3.) Our thoughts may be said to be sinful, when they are conversant about spiritual things, without suitable affections, and, consequently, meditating on them as common things, in which we are not much concerned; as when we are destitute of those holy desires after, or delight in God, when drawing nigh to him in holy duties, which his law requires. And this will more evidently appear, when, by comparing the frame of our spirit therein, with what we observe it to be in other instances, we find, that our affections are easily raised, when engaged in matters of less importance, but stupid, and unconcerned about our eternal welfare, in holy duties; which is accompanied with hardness of heart and impenitency, and sometimes with uneasiness and weariness, as though they were a burden to us.

On the other hand, our affections may be raised in these duties, and yet we be chargeable with a sinfulness of thought therein; as,

[1.] When the affections are raised by things of less importance, while other things that are more affecting, are not regarded. As, supposing a person is meditating on Christ's sufferings, and he is very much affected with, and enraged at the treachery of Judas, that betrayed him, or the barbarity of the Jews, that crucified him; but not in the least with the sin of the world, that was the occasion of it, or the greatness of his love, that moved him to submit to it.

[2.] When our affections are raised in holy duties, and this is all that we depend upon, for justification and acceptance in the sight of God, vainly supposing that our tears will wash away our sins, being destitute of faith in the blood of Christ.

[3.] When we are concerned about the misery consequent on our sins, but are not in the least inclined to hate them, nor grieved at the dishonour brought to the name of God thereby.

This leads us to consider the causes hereof, and remedies against it. If we do not find that our affections are raised in these religious exercises, as they have been in times past, we

ought to enquire into the reason thereof; whether this be not attended with some great backslidings from God, which might first occasion it. Sometimes it proceeds from a neglect of holy duties, either public or private; at other times, from presumptuous sins, committed, or continued in, with impenitency. And we often find, that our being too much embarrassed with, or immoderately engaged in our pursuit of the profits or pleasures of this world, stupifies and damps our affections, as to religious matters, so that they are seldom or never raised therein.

As to the remedies against this stupid and unaffected frame of spirit; we must not only repent of, but abstain from those sins, that have been the occasion thereof; meditate on those subjects, that are most suitable to our case, which have a tendency to enflame our love to Christ, and desire after him, and our zeal for his glory; and often confess and bewail our stupidity and unbecoming behaviour in holy duties; earnestly imploring the powerful influence of the Spirit of God, to bring us into, and keep us in a right frame of spirit for them.

(4.) We have reason to charge ourselves with sin, when guilty of blasphemous thoughts; as,

1st, When we have, by degrees, brought on ourselves a disregard of God, either by living in the neglect of holy duties, or allowing ourselves in the practice of known sins.

2dly, When, before we were followed with these thoughts, we have found that we gave way to some doubts about the divine perfections; or, through the ignorance, pride and vanity of our minds, have contracted an habitual disregard to, or neglect of that holy reverence with which we ought to meditate on them.

3dly, When we can hear those execrable oaths or curses, by which some profanely blaspheme the name of God, without expressing our resentment with the utmost abhorrence and detestation.

4thly, When we find, that being followed with blasphemous thoughts, our hearts are too prone to give in to them, as though they were the sentiments of our mind; whereby we do, as it were, consent to them, instead of rejecting them with the utmost aversion.

But, on the other hand, blasphemous thoughts are not always to be charged on us as a sin. Sometimes they are chargeable on Satan, who herein acts according to his character, as God's open enemy; and endeavours to instil into us the same ideas that he himself has. These thoughts may be charged on him; when they are hastily injected into our minds, not being the result of choice or deliberation; but are a kind of violence offered to our imagination, and, we cannot but discover the great-

est detestation of them, as well as of that enemy of souls, from whom they take their rise ; and when, at the same time, we are enabled to exercise the contrary graces, and betake ourselves to God with faith and prayer, that he would rebuke the Devil, and preserve our consciences undefiled, under this sore temptation, which we cannot but reckon one of the greatest afflictions that befall us in the world. Thus concerning the sinfulness of our thoughts.

2. We are farther said, daily to break the Commandments of God in word. Thus the apostle James speaks of the *tongue as an unruly evil full of deadly poison*, James iii. 8. Evil-speaking, as was before observed concerning the sinfulness of our thoughts, is attended with a greater or less degree of guilt, as the vanity of the mind, and the wickedness of the heart, more or less discovers itself therein. Our Saviour speaks of the accountableness of man in the day of judgment, for every *idle word*, Matt. xii. 36. to denote, that there is no sin so small, but what is displeasing to an holy God, a violation of his law, and brings with it a degree of guilt, in proportion to the nature thereof. These indeed, are the lowest instances of the sinfulness of words. There are others that are of so heinous a nature, that they can hardly be reckoned consistent with true godliness. viz. defaming, and malicious words ; which are sometimes compared to a *sword*, or *arrows*, Psal. lvii. 4. or to a *serpent's tongue*, that leaves a sting and poison behind it, Psal. cxi. 3. Again, the sinfulness of our words extends itself yet farther, as they are directed against the blessed God ; when persons *set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth*, Psal. lxxiii. 9. when they give themselves the liberty to talk profanely about sacred things, and openly blaspheme the name and perfections of God. This degree of impiety, indeed, all are not chargeable with. Nevertheless, we may say, should God mark the iniquity of our words, as well as of our thoughts, who could stand ?

3. We are said to break the Commandments of God, by deeds, i. e. by committing those sins which are contrived in the heart, and uttered with our tongues. These have been considered under their respective heads, as a violation of each of the ten Commandments, or doing those things that are forbidden therein ; and therefore we pass them over in this place, and proceed to speak concerning the aggravations of sin.

QUEST. CL. *Are all transgressions of the law of God equally heinous in themselves, and in the sight of God ?*

ANSW. All transgressions of the law of God are not equally



heinous. But some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

**T**HOUGH all sins be objectively infinite, and equally opposite to the holiness of God; yet there are some circumstances attending them, which are of that pernicious tendency, that they render one sin more heinous than another; so that it is not to be thought of, without the greatest horror and resentment; as well as expose the sinner to a sorer condemnation, if it be not forgiven. These are such as strike at the very essentials of religion, and tend, as much as in us lies, to sap the foundation thereof; as when men deny the being and perfections of God, and practically disown their obligation, to yield obedience to him. And some sins against the second table, which more immediately respect our neighbour, are more heinous than others, in proportion to the degree of injury done him thereby. Thus the taking away the life of another, is more injurious, and consequently more aggravated than barely the hating of him; which is, nevertheless, a very great crime. Moreover, the same sin, whether against the Commandments of the first or second table, may be said to be more or less heinous, in proportion to the degree of obstinacy, deliberation, malice, or enmity against God, with which it is committed; but these things will more evidently appear under the following answer; which we proceed to consider,

**QUEST. CLI.** *What are those aggravations which make some sins more heinous than others?*

**ANSW.** Sins receive their aggravations,

I. From the persons offending, if they be of riper age, greater experience, or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office; guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others.

**S**INS are greater than otherwise they would be when committed by those whose age and experience ought to have taught them better. Thus Elihu says. *A multitude of years should teach wisdom*, Job xxxii. 7. Many things would be a reproach to such persons, which are more agreeable to the character of children, than those who are advanced in age. Again, if they have had large experience of the grace of God, and been eminent for their profession, or gifts conferred on them. These circumstances will render the same sin more aggravated.

ted ; for where much is given, an improvement is expected in proportion thereunto ; and where great pretensions are made to religion, the acting disagreeable thereunto, enhances the guilt, and renders the sin more heinous. Again, if the person offending be in an eminent station, or office in the world, or the church ; so that he is either a guide to others, or the eyes of many are upon him, who will be apt to follow and receive prejudice by his example. When such an one commits a public and open sin, it is more aggravated than if it had been committed by another. Thus God bids the prophet Ezekiel *see what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark ; every man in the chambers of his imagery*, Ezek. viii. 12. And the prophet Jeremiah speaks of those who ought to have been guides to the people, viz. the priests and the prophets, Jer. xxiii. 11. 14. who transgressed against the Lord ; and charges this on them as an extraordinary instance of wickedness ; which their character in the world, and the church rendered more heinous, though it was exceeding heinous in itself.

II. Sins receive their aggravations, from the parties offended ; if immediately against God, his attributes, and worship, against Christ, and his grace ; the holy Spirit, his witness, and workings, against superiors, men of eminency, and such as we stand especially related and engaged unto ; against any of the saints, particularly weak brethren, the souls of them, or any other, and the common good of all or many.

There is no sin but what may be said to be committed against God ; yet,

1. Some are more immediately against him, as they carry in them a contempt of his attributes and worship ; whereby his name and ordinances are profaned, and the glory that is instamped thereon, little set by, Mal. i. 3, 4. Other sins reflect dishonour on our Lord Jesus Christ ; and that either on his person, when we conclude him to be, or, at least, act as if he were no other than a mere creature ; or, on his offices ; when we refuse to receive instruction from him as a prophet, or depend on his righteousness as a priest, in order to our justification and acceptance, in the sight of God ; or to submit to him as a King, who is able to subdue us to himself, and defend us from the assaults of our spiritual enemies ; or when we despise his grace, and neglect that salvation which he has purchased, and offers in the gospel, Heb. ii. 3.

Again, our sins are aggravated when they are committed against the person of the Holy Ghost ; when we deny him to be a divine Person, or the author of the work of regeneration, as supposing that grace takes its rise from ourselves, rather than



him; or when we do not desire to be led by the Spirit, or seek his divine influence in order thereunto. But, on the other hand, resist his holy motions and impressions, and act contrary to those convictions which he is pleased to grant us; by which means we are said to *grieve* and *quench the spirit*, Eph. iv. 7. 1 Thess. v. 19. Also, when we reject and set ourselves against the witness of the Spirit, and that, either by concluding, that assurance of our interest in the love of God, may be attained without it, and reckon all pretences to it no better than enthusiasm; or, when on the other hand, we suppose that the Spirit witnesses with our spirits, that we are the children of God, without regard had to the work of sanctification, that always accompanies, and is an evidence thereof; whereby we take that comfort to ourselves which does not proceed from the Spirit of holiness.

2. Sins are aggravated as committed more immediately or directly against men, and particularly those, to whom we stand related in the bonds of nature, or, who have laid us under the strongest obligations, by acts of friendship to us. This is applicable to inferiors, who ought to pay a deference to their superiors; those sins that are committed by such, contain the highest instance of ingratitude, and are contrary to the laws or dictates of nature, and therefore aggravated in proportion thereunto.

Moreover, if they are committed against the saints; this is reckoned, by God, an instance of contempt cast on himself, (whose image they are said to bear;) much more, if we oppose them as saints, Luke xvi. 16. Matt. xii. 6. And though we do not proceed to this degree of wickedness, our crime is said to be greatly aggravated, when we lay a stumbling-block before those who are weak in the faith, which may tend to discourage them in the ways of God; and, by this means, we do what in us lies, to *destroy those for whom Christ died*, Rom. xiv. 15. 1 Cor. viii. 11. This is an injury done, not so much to their bodies, as their souls; which are wounded, and brought into great perplexity thereby.

However, we must distinguish between an offence given, and unjustly taken; or, it is one thing for persons to be offended at that which is our indispensable duty, in which case we are not to regard the sentiments of those who attempt to discourage us from, or censure us for the performance of it; and our giving offence in things that are in themselves indifferent, and might, without any prejudice, be avoided; in which case a compliance with the party offended, seems to be our duty; especially if the offence takes its rise from conscience, rather, than humour and corruption; and our not complying with him herein, would tend very much to discourage and weaken his

hands in the ways of God; and therefore may be reckoned an aggravation of this sin.

Moreover, it is a farther aggravation of sin committed, where it appears to be contrary to the common good of all men. This guilt may be said to be contracted by them who endeavour to hinder the success of preaching of the gospel, 1 Thess. ii. 15. or otherwise, when the sin of one man brings down the judgments of God on a whole church or body of people; of this kind was Achan's sin, Josh. vii. 20, 21, 25.

**III.** Sins are aggravated from the nature and quality of the offence; if it be against the express letter of the law, break many commandments, contain in it many sins; if not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation; if against means, mercies, judgments, light of nature, conviction of conscience; public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments, and our prayers, purposes, promises; vows, covenants, and engagements to God or men; if done deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance.

1. Sin is aggravated when it is committed against the express letter of the law, so that there remains no manner of doubt, whether it be a sin or duty. To venture on the commission of what plainly appears to be unlawful, is to sin with great boldness and presumption, whereby the crime is very much aggravated, Rom. i. 32.

2. When it contains a breach of several of the Commandments; and therefore it may be reckoned a complicated crime. Of this kind was the sin of David, in the matter of Uriah; in which he was guilty of murder, adultery, dissimulation, injustice, &c. Also Ahab's sin against Naboth; which included in it not only covetousness, but perjury, murder, oppression, and injustice.

3. Sins are more aggravated, when they break forth in words, or outward actions, than if they were only conceived in the heart. It is true, sin in the heart has some peculiar aggravations, as it takes deeper root, becomes habitual, and is entertained with a secret delight and pleasure, and as it is the source and fountain, from whence actual sins proceed. Nevertheless, when that, which was before conceived in the heart, is discovered by words or actions, this adds a farther aggravation to it, as it brings a more public dishonour to God, and often-times a greater injury to men.

4. Sins are farther aggravated, when they are of such a na-

sure, that it is impossible for us to repair the injuries done thereby, or make restitution for them. Thus nothing can compensate for our taking away the life of another, or for our casting a reproach on the holy ways of God; and thereby endeavouring to bring his gospel into contempt; or, when we entice others to sin, by which means we turn them aside from God, and endeavour to ruin their souls; which is an injury that we cannot, by any means, repair; and therefore the crime is exceedingly aggravated.

5. If the sin committed be contrary to the very light of nature, such as would be offensive, even to the Heathen, 1 Cor. v. 1.

6. Sins receive their aggravations, when committed against means, mercies, and judgments; as when we break through all the fences which are set to prevent them; and the grace of God, revealed in the gospel, is not only ineffectual, to preserve from sin, though designed for that end, Tit. ii. 11, 12. but turned into lasciviousness, Jude, ver. 4. When mercies are misimproved, undervalued, and, as it were, trampled on, Rom. ii. 4. Isa. i. 3, Deut. xxii. 6. and judgments, whether threatened or inflicted are not regarded, nor were claimed thereby.

7. Sins are farther aggravated, when they are committed against the checks and convictions of conscience; which is a judge and a reprover within our own breasts. This is an offering violence to ourselves, and making many bold advances towards judicial blindness, hardness of heart, and a total apostacy.

8. When the sins committed are against public or private admonitions, censures of the church or civil punishments, which are God's ordinance to bring men to repentance; and if they prove ineffectual, to answer that end, they will be left more stupid than they were before.

9. Sins are farther aggravated, when they are contrary to our own prayers, vows, covenants, and promises made either to God or men. When we confess sin, or pretend to humble ourselves before God in prayer, and yet, at other times, indulge the same sins, and are proud, self-conceited, and exalt ourselves against him; or when we pray for strength against corruption, or grace to perform holy duties, when, in reality, we have no love to, nor desire after them; or when we praise him for mercies received, while we are habitually unthankful, and forgetful of his benefits. Moreover, when we are very forward to make vows, covenants, or engagements, to be the Lord's; whereby we often lay a snare for ourselves, from some circumstances that attend this action; and more especially from our disregarding it afterwards.

10. Sins are aggravated from the manner of our committing them, viz. If they are done deliberately, with fore-thought or contrivance: As when persons are said to devise mischief upon their beds; and then as to their conversation, to set themselves against that which is good, Psal. xxxiv. 5. Again, if it be done wilfully, that is, with the full bent of the will, making it the matter of our choice, and resolving to commit it, whatever it cost us. When we do it presumptuously, either when we take encouragement hereunto from the grace of God, Rom. vi. 1. or when his hand is lifted up against us, or when we see his judgments falling very heavy upon others, and are not disposed to take warning thereby; but grow more hardened and stupid than before.

Again, when sin is committed maliciously impudently, and obstinately; this argues a rooted hatred against God. Or, when it is committed with delight arising either from the thoughts we entertain thereof, before we commit it; or the pleasure we take in what we have done, afterwards. Again, when we boast of what we have done, which is to glory in our shame, Psal. x. 3. and lii. 1. when we do, as it were, value ourselves for having got rid of the prejudices of education, and all former convictions of sin, that so we may go on therein with less disturbance. And when persons boast of their over-reaching others in their way of dealing in the world, Prov. xx. 14. which they very often do in their secret thoughts, when they are ashamed to let the world know how remote they are from the practice of that justice, that ought to be between man and man. Again sins are aggravated when they are frequently committed, or when we relapse into the same sin, after having pretended to repent of it, 2 Pet. ii. 20,—22. Matt. xii. 43,—45.

IV. Sins are aggravated from circumstances of time, and place; if on the Lord's-day, or other times of divine worship, or immediately before, or after these, or other helps, to prevent or remedy such miscarriages, if in public, or in the presence of others who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled.

When sins are committed by us on the Lord's-day, it is a profaning that time which he has sanctified for his service, and so renders us guilty of a double crime; or, when they are committed at any other time, which we occasionally set apart for divine worship; or, in those seasons, when God calls for fasting and mourning for our own sins, or those that are publicly committed in the world, Isa. xxii. 12,—14. or, at other times, when we have lately received signal deliverances,

either personal or national, Psal. cvi. 7. or, when they are committed immediately before or after we have engaged in holy duties; the former renders us very unfit for them; the latter will effectually take away all those impressions, which have been made on our spirits therein.

Again, sins receive aggravation from the place in which they are committed: As for instance, if they are committed in those places, in which the name of God is more immediately called on, which if visible, will afford great matter of scandal to some, and an ill example to others; and if secretly committed, will tend to defile our souls, and argue us guilty of great hypocrisy. Moreover, when we commit those sins, which are generally abhorred in the place where providence has cast our lot: This is to render ourselves a stain and dishonour to those with whom we converse. Thus the prophet speaks of some, who, *in the land of uprightness, will deal unjustly*, Isa. xxvi. 10. and especially when they are committed in the presence of others, who are likely to be provoked or defiled thereby; by which means we contract the guilt of other men's sins, as well as our own; and are doubly guilty, in that we are, in many respects, the cause of their transgressing.

There are several instances in which we may be said to contract the guilt of other men's sins, which I shall only mention briefly, viz. when superiors lay their commands on inferiors, or oblige them to do that which is in itself sinful; or, when we advise those who stand upon a level with us, to commit sin, or give our consent to the commission of it, Acts vii. 58. chap. vii. 1. Again, when inferiors flatter superiors, or commend them for their sin: Thus when Herod had courted the applause of the people, by the oration which he made to them; they, on the other hand, flattered him, when they gave a shout, saying, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man*, chap. xii. 22. Again, when we have recourse to those places, where sin is usually committed, and desire to associate ourselves with them, whose conversation is a reproach to religion, Prov. xiii. 20. or, when we are sharers, or partakers, with others, in their unlawful gains; first encouraging, abetting, and helping them therein; and then dividing the spoil with them, chap. i. 23, 25. Again, when we connive at sin committed; or, if it be in our power, do not restrain or hinder the commission of it; or, when we conceal it, when the farther progress thereof might be prevented by our divulging it. Again, when we provoke persons to sin. And hereby draw forth their corruptions; and when we extenuate sin, whether committed by ourselves or others; which is a degree of vindicating, or pleading for it. And lastly, when we do not mourn for, or pray against those

sins which are publicly committed in the world, that are like to bring down national judgments \*.

QUEST. CLII. *What doth every sin deserve at the hands of God?*

ANSW. Every sin, even the least, being against the sovereignty, goodness, and holiness of God, and, against his righteous law, deserveth his wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come, and cannot be expiated, but by the blood of Christ.

QUEST. CLIII. *What doth God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us by reason of the transgression of the law.*

ANSW. That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law, he requireth of us repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation.

**I**N the former of these answers, we have an account of the demerit of sin; in the latter, we have the character and disposition of those who have ground to conclude that they shall be delivered from the wrath and curse of God due to it. We have already considered one sin as greater than another, by reason of several circumstances that tend to enhance the guilt of those who commit them: Nevertheless, there is no sin so small but it has this aggravation in it, that it is a violation of the law of God, and is opposite to his holiness; and therefore it cannot but render the sinner guilty in his sight; and guilt is that whereby a person is liable to suffer punishment in proportion to the offence committed: Therefore it follows, that there is no ground for that distinction which the Papists make between *mortal* and *venial* sins; whereof the former, they suppose, deserves the wrath and curse of God both in this and another world; but as for the latter, namely, *venial* sins, they conclude that they may be atoned for by human satisfactions, or penances; and that they are, in their own nature, so small, that they do not deserve eternal punishment.

\* These several heads, concerning the aggravations of sin, are contained in three or four lines, which are helpful to our memories. Most of the heads of this answer, are contained in that verse, *Quis? Quid? Ubi? Quibus auxiliis? Cur? Quomodo? Quando?* And those that relate to our contracting the guilt of other men's sins, in the following lines; *Jussu. Consilio. Consensu. Palpo. Recurreu. Participans. Nutans. Non obstant. Non manifestans. Incessans. Minuens. Non merens. Solicitans.*



This is an opinion highly derogatory to the glory of God, and opens a door to licentiousness, in a variety of instances; the contrary to which, is contained in the answer we are now explaining.

For the understanding whereof, let it be considered; that it is one thing for a sin to deserve the wrath and curse of God, and another thing for the sinner to be liable and exposed to it. The former of these arises from the heinous nature of sin, and is inseparable from it; the latter is inconsistent with a justified state. Nothing can take away the guilt of sin, but the atonement made by Christ; and that forgiveness or freedom from condemnation, which God is pleased to bestow as the consequence thereof, Rom. viii. 1, 33. It is this that discharges a believer from a liableness to the wrath and curse of God. Though one sin be greater than another, by reason of various circumstances that attend, or are contained in it, as was observed under the last answer: yet the least sin must be concluded to be objectively infinite, as it is committed against a God of infinite perfection, since all offences are great in proportion to the dignity of the person against whom they are committed. Thus the same sin that is committed against an inferior, or an equal, which deserves a less degree of punishment, if it be committed against a king, may be so circumstanced, as that it will be deemed a capital offence, and render the criminal guilty of high treason; though, at the same time, no real injury is done to, but only attempted against him. In like manner we must conclude, that though it be out of our own power to injure or detract from the essential glory of the great God; yet every offence committed against him is great, in proportion to his infinite excellency; and is therefore said to deserve his wrath and curse. Wrath or anger, when applied to God, is not to be considered as a passion in him, as it is in men; but denotes his will to punish sin committed, which takes its first rise from the holiness of his nature, which is infinitely opposite to it. And the degree of punishment that he designs to inflict, is contained in his law; which, as it denounces threatnings against those who violate it, the sinner is hereby said to be exposed to the curse or condemning sentence thereof, agreeably to the rules of justice, and the nature of the offence. This is what we are to understand, in this answer, by sin's deserving the wrath and curse of God.

And this is farther considered, as what extends itself to this life, and that which is to come. Punishments inflicted in this life, are but the beginning of miseries; but they are sometimes inexpressibly great, as the Psalmist says, *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear,*



*so is thy wrath*, Psal. xc. 11. Sometimes there is but a **very** short interval between sin and the punishment; as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Korah, and his company, Achan, and many others; whereas, at other times, it is long deferred; nevertheless, it will fall with great weight, at last, on the offender. Thus God sometimes punishes the sin of youth in old age; and when a greater degree of guilt has been contracted, writes bitter things against them, Job xiii. 26. But the greatest degree of punishment is reserved for sinners in another world; which is styled *the wrath to come*, 1 Thess. i. 10. But these things having been insisted on in some foregoing answers \*, we shall add no more on that head; but proceed to what is farther observed, *viz.* that this punishment cannot be expiated any otherwise than by the blood of Christ. This is fitly inserted after the account we have had of man's liahness to the wrath of God, by reason of sin: for when we have an afflicting sense of the guilt we have exposed ourselves to, nothing else will afford us relief.

The next thing to be considered is, how it may be removed, or by what means the justice of God may be satisfied, and an atonement made for sin. This is said to be done no other way but by the blood of Christ, as has been considered elsewhere, under a foregoing answer; in which we endeavoured to prove the necessity of Christ's making satisfaction, and the price that he paid in order thereto †. We have also considered the fruits and effects thereof, as it has a tendency to remove the guilt of sin, and procure for us a right to eternal life: ‡ Therefore, we shall pass over the consideration thereof in this place; only we may observe, that, since this can be brought about by no other means but Christ's satisfaction; it is not inconsistent with what is contained in the following words, if rightly understood by us, to assert that God requires of us, repentance, faith, and a diligent attendance on the outward means of grace; though we must not conclude them to be the procuring cause of our justification, or a means to expiate sin. They are certainly very much unacquainted with the way of salvation by Christ, as well as the great defects of their repentance and faith, who suppose, that God is hereby induced to pardon our sins, or deliver us from the wrath we have deserved thereby; nevertheless, we are not to think, that impenitent unbelieving sinners have a right to determine that they are in a justified state, or have ground to claim an interest in the benefits of Christ's redemption. Therefore, these graces are necessary to

\* See Vol. II. Quest. XXVIII, XXIX, and Vol. III. Quest. LXXXIX.

† See Vol. II. Quest. XLIV. Page 273—290.

‡ See Quest. lxx, lxxi. Vol. III. p. 66—96. and what was said under those answers, to explain the doctrine of justification

evinced our interest in what he has done and suffered for us, and they are inseparably connected with salvation; though they do not give us a right and title to eternal life, as Christ's righteousness doth. We have, in two foregoing answers, given a particular account of repentance and faith. Concerning repentance, we have observed, that it is a special saving grace, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, and have shewn in what way he works it; and also the difference between legal and evangelical repentance, as the former is often found in those who are destitute of the latter. We have considered the various acts of repentance unto life\*; what the objects and acts of saving faith are; and how it differs from that which is not so; and the use of this grace, in the whole conduct of our lives, and how it gives life and vigour to all other graces, and enables us to perform duties in a right manner†. Therefore we shall not insist on this subject at present, but only speak of repentance and faith as means appointed by God, in order to our attaining compleat salvation.

The means conducive hereunto, are either internal or external; the former of these are inseparably connected with salvation; so that *none*, who repent and *believe*, *shall perish*, John iii. 16. These graces, together with all others, that accompany or flow from them, are the fruits and effects of Christ's mediation; and therefore they are sometimes called saving graces. As they are wrought in the hearts of believers, and have a reference to salvation; they may be truly styled internal means of salvation; and, as such, they are distinguished from those outward and ordinary means of grace, by which God is pleased to work them. And these are the ordinances which we are diligently to attend on, in hopes of attaining those graces under them, till God is pleased to give success to our endeavours, and work grace under these means; the efficacy whereof, is wholly owing to his power, and is to be resolved into his sovereign will.

This may be fitly illustrated by what is said concerning the poor, *impotent, blind, halt, and withered* persons, *waiting at the pool of Bethesda*, for the *angels troubling the water*; after which, he that *first stepped in*, *was made whole*, John v. 2—4. Nevertheless, we do not find that every one who waited there embraced the first opportunity, and received a cure; for some were obliged to wait many years; and if they were made whole at last, they had no reason to think their labour lost. This may be applied to those who have the means of grace. Many sit under them who receive no saving advantage thereby, till God is pleased, in his accepted time, to work those

\* See Quest. lxxvi. Vol. III. p. 166.

† See Quest. lxxii. lxxiii. Vol. III. p. 98.

graces which render these ordinances effectual to salvation. This blessed success attending them, is from God; he could, indeed, save his people without them, as he converted Paul, when going to Damascus, with a design to persecute the church there; being not only unacquainted with, but prejudiced against the means of grace. But this is not God's ordinary method. He has put an honour on his own institutions, so as to render it necessary for us to pray, wait and hope for saving blessings, in attending on them. Thus when he promises to *put his Spirit* within his people, and *cause them to walk in his statutes*, he adds; *yet for this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them*, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 37. accordingly we are commanded to *seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near*, Isa. lv. 6. Hereby we testify our approbation of that method which he has ordained for the application of redemption; and by our perseverance therein, as determining not to leave off waiting till we have obtained the blessing expected, we proclaim the valuable-ness thereof, and subscribe to the sovereignty of God, in dispensing those blessings to his people, which they stand in need of, as well as pray and hope for them in his own time and way. Thus we are to wait on the means of grace.

And it is farther observed, that this is to be done with diligence; not in a careless and indifferent manner, as though we neither expected nor desired much advantage from them. This implies in it an embracing every opportunity, and observing those special seasons, in which God is pleased, in his gospel, to hold forth the golden sceptre of grace; as also our having earnest desires and raised expectations of obtaining that grace from him which he encourages us to wait and hope for (a).

(a) To affect to honour the mercy of God, by supposing this is sufficient for all our sins, however persevered in, is to disparage his truth which has proposed terms of mercy, connected our salvation with them, and pronounced them exclusive. It is to imagine that Deity shall change his purposes; it is an affront to his wisdom to suppose that after he has placed us in a state of probation and made us accountable, no retribution should be made. It indicates insincerity, and not a real regard for the divine glory, to set up such a substitute for the gospel scheme of salvation.

To excuse sin by alleging our impotency to good, is disingenuous; because the party can be conscious of no obstacle, unless his own inclinations to evil can be so denominated. This excuse casts the blame on God. To persist in sin under such pretences, is *to do evil that good may come*, which, the Apostle of the Gentiles declares renders condemnation just; it is to sin *that grace may abound*.

To defer the acceptance of offered mercy, and put off the work of repentance, is unwise, as it is heaping sorrows against the day of bitterness; it is imprudent, because it is to remain at enmity with Him upon whom we depend, and to be liable at every moment of this uncertain life to be involved in everlasting despair. It is evidence of a very sordid mind to prefer the base gratifications of the senses, to the refined pleasures of virtue, and the beauty, peace, and comforts of holiness.

Which leads us to speak particularly concerning those outward means, as contained in the following answer.

**QUEST. CLIV.** *What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation?*

**ANSW.** The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation, are, all his ordinances; especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

**I**N explaining this answer, we shall consider,  
**I.** What we are to understand by the ordinances, which are here styled outward and ordinary means of grace. The first idea contained in them is, that they are religious duties, prescribed by God, as an instituted method, in which he will be worshipped by his creatures; but that which more especially denominates them to be ordinances, is, the promise which he has annexed to them of his special presence, and the encouragement that he has given to his people in attending on them, to hope for those blessings that accompany salvation. As God works grace by, and under them, they are called means of grace; and because he seldom works grace without first inclining persons to attend on him therein, and wait for

If the procrastination proceed from a dread of the labour of acquiring the knowledge of the truth, this will be increased by every hour's delay, as the mind becomes thereby the less susceptible of religious impressions. The time in which the work should be accomplished also becomes the shorter; like a traveller, who has mistaken his course, the impenitent has every step to tread back again, and his time is proportionally curtailed. The truths of natural science flatter our pride and ambition, but those of religion humble and crucify them; the latter, being opposed to the carnal mind, disgust; if such disgust produce a delay of conversion, the truths which have once excited such aversion will be more likely afterwards to do it, because the mind by once having rejected them has become more sensual, and opposed to moral good.

The cares and business of life not merely pre-occupy the mind, and exclude the thoughts of religion, but augment our addictedness to earthly objects, and render progressively the mind more insensible to lessons of piety. In old age avarice or sensuality are often at the highest pitch; the man has become more impatient and irritable, tenacious even of his errors, and averse to changes, no change can be looked for but the great one, when the messenger arrives, who brings a scythe in his hand.

To defer conversion till death, that its terrors may dissolve the charms of the world, besides the hazard of surprise, is unreasonable, as it supposes mercy when we have persisted in rebellion as long as we can; it is to expect that God's Spirit shall always strive with man; it is highly presumptuous; and it exposes also to self-deception, as religion in that late hour must be the effect of necessity, and destitute of the fruits and proofs of holiness.

his salvation; therefore they are called the ordinary means of grace; and because they have not in themselves a tendency to work grace, without the inward and powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, accompanying them, they are distinguished from it, and accordingly styled the outward means of grace.

That which may be observed concerning the ordinances as thus described, is,

1. That they may be engaged in, pursuant to a divine appointment; therefore no creature hath a warrant to enjoin any modes of worship, pretending that this will be acceptable, or well-pleasing to God; since he alone, who is the object of worship, has a right to prescribe the way in which he will be worshipped. To do this would be an instance of profaneness and bold presumption; and the worship performed pursuant thereunto would be *in vain*; as our Saviour says concerning that which has no higher a sanction than *the commandments of men*, Matt. xv. 9. and whatever pretence of religion there may be therein, God looks upon such worshippers as well as those whose prescriptions they follow herein, with the utmost contempt, and will punish them for, rather than encourage them in it. Thus the prophet reproves Israel, as being guilty of defection from God, who engaged in that worship which he had not ordained, when he says, *The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels, that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing. Therefore shall ye bear the reproach of my people*, Mic. vi. 16. And Jeroboam is often branded with this character, that *he made Israel to sin*, for instituting ordinances of divine worship, and *setting up calves in Dan and Bethel, making an house of high places, and priests of the lowest of the people*, and appointing sacred times, in which they should perform this worship; all which were of his own devising, and became a snare to the people, Exod. xx. 24. It is certain, that such appointments cannot be reckoned means of grace, or pledges of God's presence; and it would redound to his dishonour, should he be obliged to communicate the benefits of Christ's redemption hereby, to any who, (under a pretence of worshipping him in a way of their own devising,) offer the highest affront to him.

2. If God is pleased to reveal his will concerning the way in which we are to worship him, and hope for his presence, it is our indispensable duty to comply with it, and implore his acceptance of us herein; and be importunate with him, that he would put a glory on his own institutions, and grant us his special presence and grace, that we may be enabled to perform whatever duty he enjoins, in such a manner, that the most

valuable ends may be answered, and our spiritual edification and salvation promoted thereby.

3. Though we consider the ordinances as instituted means of grace; yet, a bare attendance on them will not, of itself, confer grace, as is very evident from the declining state of religion, in those who engage in the external part of it, and attend upon all the ordinances of God's appointment, and yet remain destitute of saving grace; who are stupid under the awakening calls of the gospel, and regard not the invitations given therein, to adhere stedfastly to Jesus Christ, whom in words they profess to own; though in works they deny him. This is a convincing evidence, that it is God alone, who appointed those ordinances, that can make them effectual to salvation. Thus concerning the nature of an ordinance, and in what respect it may be called an outward and ordinary means of grace. We are now,

II. To consider what are those ordinances by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of his mediation. These may be considered,

1. As engaged in by particular persons, as subservient to their spiritual welfare, in order to the beginning or carrying on the work of grace in their souls; such as meditation about divine subjects, self-examination, and all other duties, which are performed by them in their private retirement, in hope of having communion with God therein. Or,

2. There are other ordinances which God has given to worshipping assemblies, which are founded in that general promise, *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee*, Exod. xx. 24. Those mentioned in this answer, are the words, sacraments and prayer; of which the sacraments are particularly given to the churches; the word and prayer, to all who are favoured with the gospel-dispensation. And to these we may add, singing the praises of God; which, though it be not particularly mentioned in this answer, is, nevertheless, a duty wherein we may expect to meet with his presence and blessing; and accordingly is an ordinance which God makes effectual to promote our salvation. Therefore, before we enter on the subject-matter of the following answers, we shall speak something concerning this duty, as an ordinance which he has instituted; together with the way and manner in which it is to be performed. And,

(1.) We may enquire what ground we have to reckon it among the ordinances of God. This must not be taken for granted, but proved; because there are many who deny it to be so. That it was an ordinance enjoined to, and practised by the church, under the Old Testament-dispensation, appears from the many songs and psalms given, by divine inspiration,



to be used by the church, in their solemn acts of worship; some of which were not only sung by particular persons; but the whole church is represented as joining therein with united voices. Thus when Pharaoh's host was drowned in the red sea, it is said, *Moses and the children of Israel sang* the song that was given by divine inspiration for that purpose, contained in Exod. xv. And when he was inspired with that song, in Deut. xxxii. he was commanded, in chap. xxxi. to *write it for them, and teach it to them, and put it in their mouths*; that they might sing it in their public worship; which he did accordingly, ver. 22. And from the days of David, when public worship was more settled than it had been before; and many things relating to the order, beauty and harmony thereof, brought into the church by divine direction, then there was an order of men called *Singers*, who were to preside over, and set forward the work. And there was also a book of psalms, given by divine inspiration, for the use of the church therein, that they might not be at a loss as to the subject-matter of praise in this ordinance; as may be inferred from the style thereof, the words being often put in the plural number; which argues, that they were to be sung, not by one person in the church, but by the whole congregation, in their solemn and public acts of worship; and accordingly we often find the whole multitude of them exhorted to sing the praises of God. Thus it is said in Psal. xxx. 4. *Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* And elsewhere, *Sing aloud unto God our strength. Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, &c. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob,* Psal. lxxxi. 1, 2, 3, 4. And sometimes the church are represented as exciting one another to this duty. Thus it is said, *O come let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms,* Psal. xcv. 1, 2.

And it may be observed, that how much soever the use of musical instruments, which were in this worship may be concluded to be particularly adapted to that dispensation, as they were typical of that spiritual joy, which the gospel church should obtain by Christ; yet the ordinance of singing remains a duty, as founded on the moral law; and accordingly we find, that the practice hereof was recommended, not only to the Jews, but to all nations. Thus it is said, *Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth,* Psal. xcvi. 4. And he speaks to this purpose, when he presses this duty upon *all lands*, whom he exhorts to *serve him with gladness; and to come before the Lord with singing,* Psal. c. 1, 2. And besides, it seems to be pre-



ferred before some other parts of worship, which were merely ceremonial. Thus the Psalmist says, *I will praise the name of God with a song. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock*, Psal. lxi. 30, 31. that is, God is more glorified hereby than he is by the external rites of ceremonial worship; especially when abstracted from those acts of faith, which add an excellency and glory to them.

And this leads us to consider it as an ordinance practised by the New Testament-church. Some had songs given in to them by inspiration; as the virgin Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, Luke i. 46, 47, & seq. chap. ii. 28, & seq. and sometimes the members of particular churches had a psalm given in by extraordinary revelation, 1 Cor. xiv. 26. and we can hardly suppose this to have been without a design that it should be sung in the church for their edification; especially considering it as an extraordinary dispensation of the Spirit: And, as the singing of a psalm in the church, is an act of public worship, it is reasonable to suppose, that the whole assembly joined together therein; and therefore this ordinance was not only practised by them, but had also a divine sanction, in that the Spirit was the author of the psalm that was sung: And we sometimes read of the church's singing an hymn, which was no other than a psalm or spiritual song, at the Lord's-supper: Thus our Saviour, in the close of that ordinance, sung an hymn with his disciples, that small church with whom he then communicated, Mark xiv. 26. And at another time, when he was come nigh to the descent of the mount of olives, it is said, that *the multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and to praise God with a loud voice*, Luke xxix. 37. where, by *the multitude of the disciples*, we must understand all that followed him, who had, at that time, a conviction in their consciences, that he was the Messiah, from the miracles which they had seen him work; and we have an account of the short hymn which they sang; *Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest*, Luke xix. 38. This was not, indeed, sung in a church-assembly; however, it was with a *loud voice*, and herein they gave glory to God: And though some of the Pharisees were offended at it, ver. 39. yet our Saviour, in the following words, vindicates their practice herein; which argues, that it was a branch of religious worship, performed by them at that time; and a duty approved of by him. All that I would infer from hence, is, that our Saviour gave countenance to the singing the praises of God, with united voices. Therefore it follows, that we ought, on all occasions, to do the same thing; and consequently, singing is an ordinance, whereby the church ought to glorify God, and shew forth his praise. Thus we

have considered singing to be an ordinance, or a branch of instituted worship.

(2.) There are several things in which this ordinance agrees with some others; particularly with prayer in all the parts thereof; and with reading and preaching of the word. That it has something in common with prayer, appears from the subject-matter of several of the psalms of David; some of which are called prayers, and accordingly they contain in them several petitions, for blessings that the church stood in need of, together with various instances of confession of sin, as well as thanksgiving for mercies received. As to the agreement of this ordinance, with preaching or reading the word; that, I think, may be inferred in general, from one of the ends thereof, mentioned by the apostle, namely, in that we are herein to *teach and admonish one another*, Col. iii. 16. This is what the Psalmist styles *talking of all his wondrous works*, Psal. cv. 1, 2. And elsewhere, the church are said to *speak to themselves*, or to *one another* in this duty, Eph. v. 19. This may be observed in the subject-matter of some of the psalms, in which the Psalmist is represented as speaking to the church, and they as making their reply to him: Thus he advises them to *lift up their hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord*, Psal. cxxxiv. 2. and answer him, *The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion*, ver. 3. The name may be observed in many other psalms, in which there is a frequent change of the person speaking; and the subject-matter of the whole book contains many admonitions or cautions necessary to be observed by others, which they who sing, direct and apply to each other. Again, this ordinance agrees with preaching and reading the word, in that we are, in singing the praises of God, to take notice of, or celebrate the dispensations of his providence, either in a way of judgment or mercy; of this we have many instances in the book of Psalms, as is very evident in all those that are properly historical.

(3.) We must, notwithstanding, suppose singing to be a distinct ordinance from preaching, prayer, or reading the word; for it is mentioned in scripture, as such; and that wherein it principally differs, is, that it is designed to raise the affections: and it is certain, that the modulation, or tone of the voice, has oftentimes a tendency so to do. And because the performing religious worship, with raised affections, is a great duty and privilege; therefore God has appointed this as an ordinance, in some degree conducive to answer that end.

*Obj.* 1. If the tone of the voice be to be reckoned an ordinance, to raise the affections; then vocal or instrumental music may be deemed sufficient to answer this end, without

making use of those words in singing, which God has ordained, whereby it may be denominated a religious duty.

*Ans.* To this it may be replied; that to have the affections raised, is no branch of religion, unless they are excited by those ideas of divine things, in which it principally consists: Therefore, that which is a means of raising the affections, may not have a tendency to excite religious affections; and, consequently, it is not barely singing, but celebrating the praises of God therein, with raised affections, that is the duty and ordinance which we ought to engage in: These two, therefore, must be connected together; and if God is pleased, not only to instruct us as to the matter about which our faith is to be conversant, but to give us an ordinance conducive to the exciting our affections therein, it must be reckoned an additional advantage, and an help to our praising him in a becoming manner.

*Obj.* 2. Those arguments that have been taken from the practice of the Old Testament-church, to prove singing an ordinance, may, with equal justice, be alleged to prove the use of instrumental music therein; since we very often read of their praising God with the sound of the trumpet, psaltery, harp, organ, and other musical instruments, Psal. cl. 3, 4, 5. which is the principal argument brought for the use of them by those who defend this practice, and conclude it an help for devotion. (a)

(a) I come now to say somewhat of the antiquity of Musical Instruments. But that these were not used in the Christian Church in the primitive times, is attested by all the ancient writers with one consent. Hence they figuratively explain all the places of the Old Testament, which speak of Musical Instruments; as I might easily shew by a thousand testimonies, out of *Clement of Alexandria, Basil, Ambrose, Jerom, Augustine, Chrysostom*, and many others. I can hardly forbear laughing, when I meet with some of their allegorical interpretations. Thus an Instrument with ten strings, according to them, signifies the Ten Commandments, as the unknown author of the Commentary upon the *Psalms*, among *Jerom's* works, often explains it, *In Ps. xxxii. 2. xliii. 4, &c.* But the pleasantest fancy is the explication of those words: *Praise him with stringed Instruments and Organs.* Ps. cl. 4. "That the guts being twisted by reason of abstinence from food, and so all carnal desires being subdued, men are found fit for the kingdom of God, to sing his praises." But *Chrysostom* talks more handsomly: "As the Jews praised God with all kind of Instruments; so we are commanded to praise him with all the members of our bodies, our eyes, &c." *In Ps. cl.* And *Clement of Alexandria* talks much to the same purpose. *Paedag. lib. ii. c. 4.*

Besides, the ancients thought it unlawful to use those Instruments in God's worship. Thus the unknown author of a Treatise, among *Justin Martyr's* works: "Q. If songs were invented by unbelievers with a design of deceiving, and were appointed for those under the Law, because of the childishness of their minds: why do they, who have received the perfect instructions of grace, which are most contrary to the foresaid customs, nevertheless sing in the Churches, just as they did, who were children under the Law? *Ans.* Plain Singing is not childish, but only the Singing with lifeless Organs, with Dancing and Cym-

**Ans.** To this it may be replied; that though we often read of music being used in singing the praises of God under

“bals, &c. Whence the use of such Instruments, and other things fit for children, is laid aside, and Plain singing only retained.” Resp. ad Orthodox. Q. 107.

*Chrysostom* seems to have been of the same mind, and to have thought, the use of such Instruments was rather allowed the *Jews* in consideration of their weakness, than prescribed and commanded. In Ps cl. But that he was mistaken, and that Musical Instruments were not only allowed the *Jews*, as he thought, and *Isidorus of Pelusium*, (whose testimony I shall mention presently) but were prescribed by God, may appear from the Texts of Scripture I have before referred to.

*Clement*, as I have mentioned already, thought these things fitter for beasts, than for men. And though *Basil* highly commends, and stily defends the way of Singing by turns; yet he thought musical Instruments unprofitable and hurtful. He calls them, *the inventions of Jubal of the race of Cain*. And a little after, he thus expresses himself: “*Laban* was a lover of the harp, and of music, with which he would have sent away *Jacob*: If thou hadst told me, said he, I would have sent thee away with mirth, and musical instruments, and an Harp. But the Patriarch avoided that music, as being a thing that would hinder his regarding the works of the Lord, and his considering the works of his hands.” Comment. in Is. c. v. p. 956, 957. And a little before, he says thus: “In such vain arts, as the playing upon the Harp, or Pipe, or dancing, as soon as the action ceases, the work itself vanishes. So that really, according to the Apostle’s expression, *The end of these things is destruction.*” page 955.

*Isidore of Pelusium*, who lived since *Basil*, held, music was allowed the *Jews* by God, in a way of condescension to their childishness: “If God says he, bore with bloody sacrifices, because of men’s childishness at that time; why should you wonder, he bore with the music of an harp and a psaltery?” Epist. lib. 2. ep. 176.

Nay, there are some ecclesiastical officers in the Church of *England*, who, for their very profession and employment, would have been kept from the communion of the Church, except they desisted from it. So we are informed by the *Apostolical Constitutions*: “If any come to the mystery of godliness, being a player upon a pipe, a lute, or an harp; let him leave it off, or be rejected.” Lib. viii. c. 32.

From what has been said, it appears, no musical instruments were used in the pure times of the Church. It became Antichristian, before they were received. *Bellarmino* himself does not deny, they were late brought into the Church, “The second ceremony, says he, are the Musical Instruments, which began to be used in the service of the Church, in the time of Pope *Vitalian*, about the year 660, as *Platina* relates out of the *Pontifical*; or, as *Aimonius* rather thinks; lib. iv. *De gestis Francorum*, c. 114. after the year 820, in the time of *Lewis the Pious*.” De Missa, lib. ii. c. 15. Item, De bon. Oper. lib. i. c. 17.

Dr. *N.* would hardly have denied, the Church of *Rome* was become Antichristian, when they were first brought in; even though we should allow *Bellarmino*’s first date of them to be the true one. But a Reformed Divine may well be ashamed of that antiquity, that does not exceed the rise of Antichrist. But I am fully satisfied both *Bellarmino*’s dates are false, and that instrumental music, in the worship of God, is much later than either of those accounts allow. For as to *Platina*, he seems to suspect the truth of what he wrote: “*Vitalian*, says he, being careful about the worship of God, made an ecclesiastical rule, and ordered the singing, with the addition (as some think) of organs.” In *Vital.* Again, *Bellarmino*’s *Aimonius* is not the true *Aimonius*. For (as Dr. *Cave* says) *Aimonius of Fleury*, who wrote, *De gestis Francorum*, flourished about the year 1000; and his History, which begins at the destruction of *Troy*, is brought down as far as the coronation of King *Pipin*, or to the year 752. For what comes after

the Old Testament; yet if what has been said concerning its being a type of that spiritual joy which attends our praising

that, and makes up the fifth book, and the latter part of the fourth, is the continuation of another hand. *Hist. Liter. p. 597.*

Farther, that these instruments were not used in God's worship, in *Thomas Aquinas's* time, that is, about the year 1250, he himself is witness. "In the old Law, says he, God was praised both with musical instruments and human voices, and according to that *Psalm xxxiii. Praise the Lord with harp, sing unto him with the psalter, and an instrument of ten strings.* But the Church does not use musical instruments to praise God, lest she should seem to judaize. Therefore, by parity of reason, she should not use singing." *Secunda secundæ Questio 91, art. 4. & conclus. 4.* The like objection is made by our author. But *Thomas* answers: "As to this objection, we must say, as the philosopher, *Lib. viii. Polit.* that Pipes are not to be used for teaching, nor any artificial instruments, as the harp, or the like: but whatever will make the hearers good men. For these musical instruments rather delight the mind, than form it to any good disposition. But under the Old Testament such instruments were used, partly because the people were harder and more carnal; upon which account they were to be stirred up by these instruments, as likewise by earthly promises; and partly because these bodily instruments were typical of some thing." Upon which place *Cardinal Cajetan* gives us this Comment: "Tis to be observed, the Church did not use organs in *Thomas's* time. Whence, even to this day, the Church of *Rome* does not use them in the Pope's presence. And truly it will appear, that musical instruments are not to be suffered in the ecclesiastical offices we meet together to perform, for the sake of receiving internal instruction from God; and so much the rather are they to be excluded, because God's internal discipline exceeds all human disciplines, which rejected these kind of instruments." *Cit. Hoffm. Lex. voce Musica.*

If any one objects the practice of some foreign churches, I answer with *Mr. Hickman*: "They are laid aside by most of the reformed churches; nor would they be retained among the *Lutherans*, unless they had forsaken their own *Luther*; who, by the confession of *Eckard*, reckoned organs among the ensigns of *Baal*. That they still continue in some of the *Dutch* churches, is against the minds of the Pastors. For in the National Synod at *Middleburg*, in the year 1581, and in the Synod of *Holland* and *Zealand*, in the year 1594, it was resolved, That they would endeavour to obtain of the magistrate the laying aside of organs, and the singing with them in the churches, even out of the time of worship, either before or after sermons: so far are those Synods from bearing with them in the worship itself." *Apol. p. 139.*

The Church of *England* herself had formerly no very good opinion of these musical instruments; as may appear by her Homilies: "Lastly, God's vengeance hath been, and is daily provoked, because much wicked people pass nothing to resort unto the church; either for that they are so sore blinded, that they understand nothing of God or godliness, and care not with devilish malice to offend their neighbours; or else for that they see the church altogether scoured of such gay gazing sights, as their gross phantasie was greatly delighted with; because they see the false religion abandoned, and the true restored, which seemeth an unsavory thing to their unsavory taste, as may appear by this that a woman said to her neighbour: Alas! gossip, what shall we now do at church, since all the Saints are taken away; since all the goodly sights we were wont to have are gone; since we cannot hear the like piping, singing, Chaunting, and playing upon the organs that we could before? But, dearly beloved, we ought greatly to rejoice and give God thanks, that our churches are delivered out of all those things, which displeased God so sore, and filthily defiled his holy house, and his place of prayer." *Hom. of the place and time of prayer, part. 2. p. 131.*

A great number also of the Clergy in the first convocation of *Queen Elizabeth*



God for the privilege of that redemption which Christ has purchased be true ; then this objection will appear to have no weight, since this type is abolished, together with the ceremonial law. And it may be farther observed, that though we read of the use of music, in the temple-service, yet it does not sufficiently appear, that it was ever used, in the Jewish synagogues ; wherein the mode of worship more resembled that which is, at present, performed by us in our public assemblies. But that which may sufficiently determine this matter, is, that, we have no precept or precedent for it in the New Testament, either from the practice of Christ, or his apostles. And inasmuch as this is alleged, by some, to overthrow the ordinance of singing, who pretend, that it ought to be no more used by us than the harp, organ, or other musical instruments : It might as well be objected, that, because incense, which was

in 1562, earnestly laboured to have organs, and that pompous theatrical way of singing laid aside, and missed the carrying it but by one vote, as I observe elsewhere. And in this Archbishop *Parker* concurred with them, or at least did not oppose them.

I will add one or two testimonies of Papists against this cathedral way of worship. The first shall be *Polydorus Virgilius*.

Having taken notice of *Austine's* dislike of that way of singing in his time, he thus proceeds : " But in our time, it seems much less useful to the common-wealth, now our singers make such a noise in our churches, that nothing can be heard, beside the sound of the voice ; and they who come there (that is all that are in the city) are satisfied with the concert of music, which their ears itch for, and never mind the sense of the words. So that we are come to that pass, that in the opinion of the common people, the whole affair of religious worship is lodged in these singers ; although, generally speaking, there is no sort of men more loose or wicked : and yet a good part of the people run to church, as to a theatre, to hear them bawl : they hire and encourage them ; and look upon them alone as ornaments to the house of God. Wherefore, without doubt, it would be for the interest of religion, either to cast these jackdaws out of the churches ; or else to teach them when they sing, they should do it rather in the manner of reading, than bawling ; as *Austine* says *Athanasius* ordered, &c." *De Invent. Rer. lib. vi. c. 2. p. 379.*

Next hear the judgment of *Erasmus* : " Let a man be more covetous than *Crassus*, more foul-mouthed than *Zoilus*, he shall be reckoned a pious man, if he sings those prayers well, though he understands nothing of them. But what, I beseech you, must they think of Christ, who can believe he is delighted with such a noise of men's voices ? Not content with this, we have brought into our churches a certain operose and theatrical music ; such a confused disorderly chattering of some words, as I hardly think was ever heard in any of the *Grecian* or *Roman* theatres. The church rings with the noise of trumpets, pipes and dulcimers ; and human voices strive to bear their part with them.— Men run to church as to a theatre, to have their ears tickled. And for this end organ-makers are hired with great salaries, and a company of boys, who waste all their time in learning these whining tones. Pray now compute how many poor people in great extremity might be maintained by the salaries of those singers." In 1 Cor. xiv. 19.

Lastly, *Lindanus* says : " Who will compare the Music of this present age, with that which was formerly used ? Whatever is sung now, signifies little for informing the people ; which 'tis certain the ancients always designed." *P. popl lib. iv. c. 78.*

PIERCE'S VINDICATION.

used under the ceremonial law, together with prayer in the temple, Luke i. 9, 10. is not now offered by us; therefore prayer ought to be laid aside; which is, as all own, a duty founded on the moral law.

(4.) In singing those psalms or songs, which are given by divine inspiration, we are not to consider the subject-matter thereof, as always expressive of the frame of our own spirits, or denoting the dispensations of providence, which we, or the church of God are, at present exercised with. This is necessary in order to our singing with understanding; and it may be inferred from what is observed under the second of those heads, before laid down, relating to the agreement which there is between singing and reading any of David's psalms.

It must be allowed by all, that we ought to have the same acts of faith in one, as we have in the other. This is evident from all composures in prose or verse, whether divine or human. If the subject-matter be historical, whatever the form be in which it is laid down, the principal things to be considered are, those matters of fact which are therein related. If an history be written in prose, and the same should be turned into verse; its being laid down in the form of a poem, though it adds something of beauty to the mode of expression, yet the ideas, that are conveyed thereby, or the historical representation of things, are the same as though they had not been written in verse. It may be, the reading the same history in verse, may add something of pleasure and delight to those ideas which we have of it, in like manner as singing, according to the third head before mentioned, is a distinct ordinance from reading (though the matter be the same, as it respects the exciting the affections;) yet this does not give us different ideas of it; much less are we to take occasion from thence, to apply those things to ourselves that are spoken of others; unless parallel circumstances require it. If this rule be not observed, I do not see how we can sing many of the psalms of David. Sometimes the subject-matter thereof is not agreeable to every age of life, or the universal experience of particular persons. It would be very preposterous for a child, in singing those words, *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread*, Psal. xxxvii. 25. or what is elsewhere said; *Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not*, Psal. lxxi. 18. to apply them, in particular to himself. And when some other psalms are sung in a public assembly, in which God's people are represented as dejected, disconsolate, and, as it were, sinking in the depths of despair; as when the Psalmist says, *My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed*, Psal. lxxvii. 2, 3. and else-



where, *I am counted with them that go down into the pit. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me. While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted*, Psal. lxxxviii. 4, 7, 15. This cannot be applied to every particular person in a worshipping assembly; as denoting that frame of spirit in which he is, at present, any more than those expressions which we meet with elsewhere, which speak of a believer, as having full assurance of God's love to him, and his right and title to eternal life; as when it is said, *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory*, Psal. lxxiii, 24. can be applied to those who are in a dejected, despairing, or unbelieving frame of spirit.

And those psalms which contain an historical account of some particular dispensations of providence towards the church of old, cannot be applied to it in every age, or to the circumstances of every believer; as when it is said, *By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion*, Psal. cxxxvii. 1. This is not to be considered as what is expressive of our own case, when we are, in the present day, singing that psalm, Or, when, on the other hand, the church is represented as praising God for particular deliverances, as in Psal. cvii. or expressing its triumphs in the victories obtained over its enemies, as in Psal. cxlix. these are not to be applied, by particular persons, to themselves; especially at all times. And when the Psalmist makes use of those phrases which are adapted to the ceremonial law, as when he speaks of *binding the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar*, Psal. cxviii. 27. or elsewhere, of their *offering bullocks upon it*, Psal. li. 19. this cannot be taken in a literal sense, when applied to the gospel-state. And when we are exhorted to *praise God with the psaltery*, &c. Psal. cl. we are to express those acts of faith which are agreeable to the present gospel-dispensation, which we are under; and the general rule, which is applicable to all psalms of the like nature, is, that with the same frame of spirit with which we read them, we ought to sing them. Sometimes we are to consider the subject-matter of them, as containing an account of those providences which we are liable to, rather than those which we are, at present, under; or what we desire, or fear, rather than experience; and improve them so as to excite those graces which ought to be exercised in like circumstances, when it shall please God to bring us under them. With this frame of spirit the psalms of David are to be sung, as well as read; otherwise we shall be obliged to exclude several of them as not fit to be used in gospel-worship, which I would assert nothing that should give the least countenance to, (a) any more

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(a) The first hymns of Gospel churches, were neither rythm, nor metre; and there was no version of David's psalms, that could be sung before Calvin's time.

than I would affirm that such-like psalms are not to be read in public assemblies.

*Obj.* 1. To what has been said concerning our using David's psalms in singing the praises of God, it is objected, that some of them contain such imprecation, or desires, that God would destroy his enemies, Psal. lv. 15. and lix. 13—15. and lxix. 22—25, 27, 28. as are inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, or that love which we are, therein, obliged to express towards our enemies, agreeably to the command and practice of the holy Jesus, Matt. v. 44, 46. Luke xxiii. 34.

Before I proceed to a direct answer to this objection, it may be observed, that this is generally alleged, by the Deists, with a design to cast a reproach on divine revelation; and from hence they take occasion, outrageously to inveigh against David, as though he was of a malicious and implacable spirit; upon which account they will hardly allow him to have been a good man, since these, and such-like imprecations of the wrath of God on the church's enemies, are reckoned by them no other than the effects of his passion and hatred of them; and therefore it is a preposterous thing to suppose, that his psalms were given by divine inspiration.

And there are others, to wit, some among the Socinians, who give a different turn to such-like expressions; and pretend, that under the Old Testament dispensation, it was not unlawful for persons to hate their enemies, or curse, or imprecate the wrath of God upon them, whereas, our Saviour thought fit, under the New Testament-dispensation, to command what was directly contrary thereunto. That it was formerly lawful, they argue from what is said in Matt. v. 43. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.* And the new Commandment which he substituted in the room thereof, is contained in the following words, in which he obliges them, to *love their enemies, &c.* But this is a gross mistake of the sense of that scripture, which speaks of *hating* their *enemies*; since our Saviour does not, in mentioning it, design to refer to any thing said in the Old Testament, but only to expose the corrupt gloss of the Scribes and Pharisees, given on some passages contained therein. Therefore, we must conclude, that it was equally unlawful to hate our enemies before, as it is now, under the gospel-dispensation. These things I could not but premise, before we come to a direct answer to this objection; and, if what is contained therein were true, it would certainly be unlawful to sing David's psalms; yet, at the same time, it would be a very difficult matter, to substitute any hymns and songs in their room, which would be altogether unexceptionable; and then the ordinance of signing would be effectually overthrown.

*Answ.* But to this it may be replied; that the words being spoken by David, under divine inspiration, some of those scriptures referred to, may, agreeably to the rules of grammar, be understood as a prediction of those judgments which God would execute on his implacable enemies; especially when the word, that is supposed in the objection, to contain the form of an imprecation, is put in the *future tense*, as it often is. And if it be put in the *imperative mood*, as in other places, in which it is said, *Let death seize on them; let them go down quick into hell; let them be blotted out of the book of the living*; this mode of speaking, especially when applied to God, contains an intimation of what he would do, or the wrath which he would pour forth, as a punishment of sin, committed, persisted in, and not repented of. And, indeed, in one of these psalms, viz. Psal. lxi. in which the righteous judgments of God are denounced against sinners, the Psalmist plainly speaks in the person of our Saviour, to whom the 9th and 21st verses are expressly applied in the New Testament, John ii. 17. Matt. xxvii. 34. Therefore, when he says, ver. 22. *Let their table become a snare*, the meaning is, that God would deny some of his furious and implacable enemies, that grace, which alone could prevent their waxing worse and worse under outward prosperity. And when he says, ver. 23. *Let their eyes be darkened*; the meaning is, they shall be given up to judicial blindness, as the Jews were; the providence of God permitting, though not effecting it. And when it is said, ver. 23. *Pour out thine indignation upon them*, it is an intimation that this should come to pass. And, in ver. 25. *Let their habitation be desolate*; the meaning is, that the land, in which they dwelt, should be destitute of its former inhabitants, and so contains a prediction of the desolate state of the Jewish nation, after they were destroyed, and driven out of their country by the Romans. And when he farther says, *Add iniquity to their iniquity*; this may be accounted for consistently with the divine perfections, and the sense thereof is not liable to any just exception; as has been observed elsewhere. This I only mention, to shew that it is not necessary to suppose that these imprecations are always to be understood as what will warrant, or give countenance to private persons to wish, or pray for the destruction of their enemies.

Moreover, if the evil denounced be of a temporal nature; as when the Psalmist is represented as desiring that his enemies may be *consumed as the stubble before the wind*, or as *the wood that fire burneth*, Psal. lxxxiii. 13, 14. these are not the desires of one who meditates private revenge, or wishes to see the ruin of those whom he hates. But they contain the language of the church of God in general, as acquiescing in

his righteous judgments, which should be poured forth on those that hate him, and persecute his people; and, if either the church must be ruined, or those that set themselves against it, removed out of the way, they cannot but desire the latter, rather than the former. If such expressions be thus understood, there would be no sufficient reason for that exception that is taken against the book of the psalms; nor will any one have just occasion to lay aside a part of them, as what cannot be sung by a Christian congregation.

*Object. 2.* It is farther objected, that if singing could be proved to be an ordinance, to be used by particular persons; it will not follow from thence, that the whole congregation ought to join with their voices together. It is sufficient if one person sings, and others make melody in their hearts; whereas, united voices in signing, will occasion confusion in the worship of God; and, when a mixed multitude join in this ordinance, it can hardly be supposed that they, all of them, sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also. Therefore, if one should sing, it is sufficient for them who are qualified to join in this ordinance, to say, Amen; or, to have their hearts engaged therein; as they have who join in public prayer, in which, one is the mouth of the whole assembly.

*Ans.* To this it may be replied;

[1.] That to insinuate that singing with united voices, is confusion, is to cast a great reproach on that worship which we often read of in scripture, which was performed in this manner. Thus Moses and the children of Israel sang the praises of God upon the occasion of their deliverance from the Egyptians, in Exod. xvi. 1. which was certainly an act of public worship, not performed by Moses alone, but by the whole congregation.

And, in the New Testament, there is a very remarkable example of singing with united voices, our Saviour himself being present, Mark xiv. 26. thus it is said, that he and his disciples *sang an hymn*. The word is in the plural number \*; therefore they all joined with their voices in singing; and some observe, that it is not without design that it is said, *He*, that is, Christ, *blessed the bread*, and *He gave thanks*, Mat. xxvi. 26, 27. they only joining with him in their hearts, as the congregation joins with the minister, who is their mouth in public prayer. But when he speaks of the ordinance of singing, they all join with their voices therein; and therefore, the word, as was but now observed, is in the plural number, ver. 30.

[2.] As to that part of the objection, which respects the congregation's joining in the heart, with one that sings with the voice, in like manner as we do in prayer; let it be considered, that though he that joins with the heart, with another that

\* *ᾠδοῦντες*.

prays, may be said to perform the duty of prayer, though he does not express his desires with his own voice; yet joining with the heart, while one only sings, cannot properly speaking, be called singing; much less singing with the voice, or singing with a loud voice, as it is often expressed in scripture. The apostle, indeed, speaks of *singing and making melody in our hearts, to the Lord*, Eph. v. 19. which, in some measure, seems to favour the objection. And it is inferred from hence, that, if one sings with the voice, others may make melody in the heart. But I take the meaning of that scripture to be this; the apostle is pressing the church to sing, that is, to make melody to the Lord; and, that this ordinance may be performed in a right manner, the heart ought to go along with the voice; hereby intimating, that there ought not only to be a melodious sound, by which the praises of God are sung, but, together with this, suitable acts of faith ought to be put forth, whereby we worship him with our hearts, as well as our voices. This does not therefore prove, that the melody here spoken of, only respects the frame of spirit, as excluding the use of the voice in singing.

[3.] As to what is objected against the inexpediency of joining in singing, with a mixed multitude, in which, some must be supposed to want two necessary qualifications for singing, namely, the Spirit and understanding; this is to join in the external ordinance, where there is no harmony, as to the internal frame of spirit, or the exercise of faith, which alone makes it pleasing to God.

To this it may be replied; that, if a mixed multitude may join together in prayer, and particularly the Psalms of David, may be read in the public congregation; though, perhaps, there are many present who do not understand the meaning of every particular phrase used therein: yet it does not follow, that because we do not fully understand the Psalms of David, therefore they ought not to be sung by us. We have before observed, that there is no essential difference, especially as to what concerns the frame of our spirit, between singing and reading (a). Therefore it follows, that whatever psalm may be read, may be sung. He that is not qualified for the latter is not qualified for the former. The apostle, indeed, speaks of his *praying and singing with the Spirit*, as well as *with the understanding*; but the meaning of that is, that we ought to desire the efficacious influences of the Spirit, and press after the knowledge of the meaning of the words we use, either in prayer or singing; yet the defect of our understanding, or having a less degree thereof than others, or, than we ought to have, does not exempt us from a right to engage in this ordi-

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(a) There is a difference between praising God, and instructing men.

nance. Therefore, we are not to refuse to join with those in singing the praises of God, whom we would not exclude from our society, if we were reading any of the Psalms of David in public.

(5.) We are now to consider the matter to be sung. There are very few who allow singing to be an ordinance, that will deny it to be our duty to sing the Psalms of David, and other spiritual songs, which we frequently meet with in scripture. Some, indeed, have contested the expediency of a Christian assembly's making use of several Old Testament-phrases, that are contained therein. And others have alleged, that the phrase ought to be altered in many instances, (especially in those which have a peculiar reference to the Psalmist's personal circumstances,) and others substituted in their room, which are matter of universal experience. But, if what has been said under the last head, be true, this argument will appear to have less weight in it; inasmuch as all the arguments that are brought in defence of making these alterations in the Psalms, as they are to be sung by us, will equally hold good, as applicable to the ordinance of reading them, and, it may be, will as much evince the necessity of altering the phrase of scripture, in several other parts thereof, as well as in these, if what has been said under the second head be allowed of. For it will follow from thence, that if some psalms are not to be sung by a Christian assembly, in the words in which they were at first delivered, and consequently are not to be read by them; because the phrase thereof is not agreeable to the state of the Christian church; and therefore it is to be altered, when applied to our present use; the same may be said concerning other parts of scripture; and then the word of God, as it was at first given to us, is no more to be read, than to be sung by us (a).

As to what is objected concerning the inexpediency of our making use of those words, and applying them to our case, in our devotions, that David used in his, with a peculiar view to his own condition. What has been said under the fourth head, relating to the frame of spirit with which the psalms are to be sung, will very much weaken the force of it; and this is what, in a great measure, determines my sentiments as to the ordinance of conjoint singing, as well as the matter of it; for, I am well persuaded, that if the words were to be considered as our own, (as they ought to be, when joining with another, who is our mouth, to God in prayer,) there are very few psalms, or hymns of human composure, that can be sung by a mixed assembly. But as a divine veneration ought to be paid to the psalms, and they are to be read with those acts of faith which are the main ingredients in our devotions; we are

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(a) The first christians composed and set to music their hymns.



to sing them with the same view, only with this difference; as making use of the tone of the voice, as a farther help to the raising our affections therein, as has been before observed.

The next thing to be considered is, what version of the Psalms is to have the preference in our esteem, as it is subservient to the design of this ordinance. It is not my business, under this head, to criticise on the various versions of the Psalms; nor can it be supposed, that I have a regard to those poetical beauties in which one version exceeds another; for then I should be inclined to think some of them, which I do not make use of in the ordinance of singing, much preferable to others, for the exactness of their style and composure. But when I am singing the praises of God, in, or as near as I can to, the words of David, or any other inspired writer; that which I principally regard is, the agreeableness of the version to the original; and then they may be sung with the same frame of spirit with which they are to be read; and I am not obliged in singing, to consider the words as expressive of my own frame of spirit, any more than I am in reading them. But if the composure cannot properly be called a version, but an imitation of David's Psalms, then I make use of it in the ordinance of singing, with the same view as I would an hymn; of which, more hereafter (a).

The versions which, I think, come nearest to the original, are the New-England and the Scots; the latter of which, I think, much preferable to the former; inasmuch as the sentences are not so transposed in this, as in the other, and the lines are much more smooth and pleasant to be read. I should be very glad to see a version more perfect, that comes as near the sense of the original, and excels it in the beauty or elegance of style. And it would be a very great advantage if some marginal notes were added, as a comment upon it; which would be a help to our right understanding thereof.

I shall now give my thoughts concerning the singing of hymns. These, according to the common acceptation of the word, are distinguished from psalms, and they generally denote a human composure, fitted for singing; the matter whereof, contains some divine subjects, in words agreeable to, or deduced from scripture. The arguments that are generally brought in defence thereof, are, that though scripture be a rule

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(a) Grotius thought the first Gospel hymns were extemporary. Basnage from Tertullian says; "neither the prayers they made to God, nor the hymns which they sung to his honour were reduced to rule; every one drew them from the Holy Scriptures, or from his own treasure, according to his genius." A council of 70 bishops, A. D. 272. charged among other things against Paulus bishop of Antioch, that he abolished the Psalms, which were sung in *gloriam Christi*.—When the Arians sang the doxology *Glory be to the Father*, the orthodox added, *and to the Son and Spirit*. Vide Dr. Latta, and Mr. Tod, on Psalmody.



of faith, from whence all the knowledge of divine things is primarily deduced; and therefore it has the preference, as to the excellency and authority thereof, to any other composure; yet it is not only lawful, but necessary to express our faith in the doctrines contained therein, in other words, as we do in prayer or preaching. Therefore, if it be a duty to praise God with the voice, it is not unlawful to praise him in words agreeable to scripture, as well as in the express words thereof; accordingly it is argued, that both may be proved to be a duty, viz. praising God in the words of David, and by other songs contained in scripture, and praising him in words agreeable thereunto, though of human composure. This is the best method of reasoning that I have met with in defence of the lawfulness of singing hymns, not as opposed to, or excluding David's Psalms, but as used occasionally, as providence directs us; that so our acknowledgments of benefits received, may be insisted on with greater enlargement than they are in the book of Psalms; wherein, though it may be, there is something adapted to every case, yet the particular occasion of our praise is not so largely contained in the same section or paragraph; and therefore an hymn may be composed on that occasion, in order to our praising God thereby. But, when on the other hand, persons seem to prefer hymns to David's Psalms, and substitute them in the room thereof, I cannot but disapprove of their practice.

A late writer \* speaks on this subject with a great deal of moderation; when, though he proves that scripture psalms should be preferred before all others, and more ordinarily sung; yet he thinks that hymns of human composure, ought not wholly to be excluded, provided they be exactly agreeable to, and as much as may be, the words of holy scripture. There are other writers whom I pay equal deference to, who have concisely, though with a considerable degree of judgment, proved singing to be a gospel-ordinance †, who argue against singing of *hymns*: and, indeed, what they say in opposition to those who defend the practice thereof from Eph. v. 19. and Col. iii. 16. wherein *hymns* are supposed to be distinct from *psalms and spiritual songs*; and, consequently, that we are to understand thereby human composures, agreeable to scripture, as by psalms and spiritual songs, we are to understand those which are contained in the very words of scripture, seems very just. And herein they speak agreeably to the mind of several

\* See Mr. Richard Allein's essay on singing, chap. iv. who seems, in my opinion, in the whole of his short performance, to argue with a considerable degree of candor and judgment.

† See Sidenham's gospel ordinance concerning singing, &c. and Fitch's scripture proof for singing, &c.

judicious and learned men, who assert that these three words signify nothing else but those psalms or songs that are contained in scripture \*. The question in debate with me, is not whether the psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs, that are contained in scripture, are designed to be a directory for gospel-worship; for that, I think, all ought to allow; but, whether it be lawful to sing a human composure that is agreeable to scripture, either as to the words or sense thereof; especially when the subject-matter of our praise is not laid down so largely in one particular section of scripture, as we desire to express it. In this case, if we were to connect several parts of scripture together, so that the design of enlarging on a particular subject might be answered thereby; it would render it less necessary to compose an hymn in other words. But, inasmuch as the occasions of praise are very large and extensive, and therefore it may be thought expedient, to adore the divine perfections, in our own words in singing, in like manner as we do in prayer, considering the one to be a moral duty as well as the other; I will not pretend to maintain the unlawfulness of singing hymns of human composure, though some of much superior learning and judgment have done it.

I would, however, always pay the greatest deference to those divine composures, which are given as the principal rule for our procedure herein. Nevertheless, I cannot but express my dislike of several hymns that I have often heard sung; in some of which the heads of the sermon have been comprised; and others, which are printed, are so very mean and injudicious, and, it may be, in some respects, not very agreeable to the analogy of faith, that I cannot, in the least, approve of them. But if we have ground to conclude the composure, as to the matter thereof, and mode of expression, unexceptionable, and adapted to raise the affections, as well as excite suitable acts of faith in extolling the praises of God, it gives me no more disgust, though it be not in scripture-words, than praying or preaching do when the matter is agreeable thereunto. Yet, inasmuch as when we confess sin, acknowledge mercies received, or desire those blessings that are suited to our case, we always suppose, that the words, which he, who is the mouth of the congregation, uses, ought to be such, in

\* It cannot be denied that the Psalms of David are called indifferently by these three names, psalms, hymns, and songs שיר, מזמור, תהלה, ψαλμός, ὕμνος, ᾠδή, and sometimes the same psalm is called a song or psalm, as in the title of Psalm. lxxv. or a song of a psalm [as the LXX. render it, ᾠδὴ ψαλμοῦ.] And in Psalm cv. 2. when it is said, Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him; שיריו לוֹ זמרוֹ לוֹ the former word signifies to sing a spiritual song; the latter to sing a psalm; or, as the Septuagint render the same word, in 1 Chron. xvi. 9. an hymn [ᾠδὴ αὐτῷ καὶ ὑμναῖς.] See Sidenham's gospel-ordinance, &c. chap. ii. and Ainsworth on the title of Psalm liii. whom he therein refers to.

which all can join with him (and in this, the reading one of David's prayers, and putting up a prayer in the congregation, differ as to a very considerable circumstance in each of them) the same ought to be observed in hymns. But, if an *hymn* be so composed, as that all that sing it are represented as signifying their having experienced those things which belong not to them, or as blessing God for what they never received: this, I conceive, would be an unwarrantable method of singing hymns of human composure, as much as if the expressions were used in public prayer. There are, indeed, many hymns which have in them a great vein of piety and devotion, but are not adapted to the experience of the whole assembly that sings them; therefore, though they may join in signing some hymns, I do not think they can well join in singing all; notwithstanding the subject-matter of them may be agreeable to the analogy of faith; and this principally depends upon what we have before laid down, concerning the difference between making use of a divine and human composure, in the former of which, the words are not always to be considered as our own, or expressive of the frame of our own spirits; whereas this is universally true, with respect to the latter.

Thus concerning the ordinance of singing; which we cannot but think included among those whereby Christ communicates to his church, the benefits of his mediation. And this leads us to consider the other ordinances, which are particularly insisted on in the remaining part of this work. And that which next comes under our consideration, is the word read and preached.

**QUEST. CLV.** *How is the word made effectual to salvation?*

**ANSW.** The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners, of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ, of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will, of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions, of building them up in grace, and establishing their heart in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

**H**AVING had an account, in the foregoing answer, of the ordinances by which Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to his church, and what they are; as also, that singing the praises of God is one of those ordinances. We are now to consider another ordinance that is made effectual to salvation, *viz.* the word read, or preached. We have, un

der some foregoing answers, had occasion to speak of the word of God as contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and considered it as the only rule of faith and obedience, and as having all the properties that are necessary thereunto, so that we may depend upon it as a perfect and infallible revelation of all things necessary to be believed and done, in order to our enjoying God here, and attaining eternal life hereafter \*. And now we are to consider the word as made the subject of our study and enquiry; without which it would be of no use to us. Accordingly we may observe in this answer,

I. Something supposed; namely, that the word of God is to be read by us, and explained by those who are qualified and called hereunto, by whom it is to be preached. We are not, indeed, to conclude, that the explications of fallible men, how much soever they are fitted to preach the gospel, are of equal authority with the sacred oracles, as transmitted to us by those who received them, by infallible inspiration from the Spirit of God; and therefore, the text is much more to be depended on than the comment upon it; the truth whereof is to be tried thereby, Isa. viii. 20. 1 Thess. v. 21. Acts xvii. 11. Nevertheless, this is to be reckoned a great blessing, which God is pleased to bestow upon his church, in order to our understanding and making a right use of the written word. Accordingly, preaching, as well as the reading of the word, is an ordinance which the Spirit of God makes subservient to the salvation of them that believe; and in order thereunto, it is farther supposed, that the word is to be read by us, and we are to attend to the preaching thereof; to neglect either of which, is to despise our own souls, and deprive ourselves of the advantage of God's instituted means of grace. Therefore, we are not to content ourselves, barely, with the reading of the word of God, in our closets or families; but we must embrace all opportunities, in which we may hear it preached in a public manner, one being no less an ordinance of God than the other.

*Obj.* It is objected, by some, that they know as much as ministers can teach them; at least, they know enough, if they could but practise it.

*Ans.* This objection, sometimes, savours of pride and self-conceit, in those who suppose themselves to understand more, of the doctrines of the gospel, than they really do; and it can hardly be said, concerning the greatest number of professors, that they either know as much as they ought, or that it is not possible for them to make advances in knowledge, by a dili-

\* See Vol. I. 48. 60. Quest. iii. and iv.

gent attendance on an able and faithful ministry. However, that we may give the utmost scope to the objection, we will allow, that some Christians know more than many ministers, who are less skilful than others in the word of truth. Nevertheless, it must be observed that there are other ends of hearing the word, besides barely the gaining of knowledge, *viz.* the bringing the doctrines of the gospel to our remembrance, John xvi. 26. and their being impressed on our affections; and for this reason the wisest and best of men have not thought it below them, to attend upon the ministry of those who knew less than themselves. Our Saviour was an hearer of the word before he entered on his public ministry, Luke ii. 46. and though it might, I think, truly be said of him, that though he was but twelve years old, he knew more than the doctors, in the midst of whom he sat, in the temple, yet he *heard and asked them questions*. And David, though he professes himself to have *more understanding than all his teachers*, Psal. cxix. 99. yet he was glad to embrace all opportunities, to go up into the house of the Lord; this being God's appointed means for a believer's making advances in grace.

II. There are several things particularly mentioned in this answer, in which the Spirit of God makes the word, read or preached, effectual to salvation.

1. Hereby the mind is enlightened and furnished with the knowledge of divine truths; which is a very great privilege, for as faith is inseparably connected with salvation; the knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel is necessary to faith; and this is said to *come by hearing*, Rom. x. 17. Acts viii. 30, 31. However, we must not content ourselves with a bare assent to what is revealed in the word of God; but must duly weigh the tendency thereof, to our sanctification and consolation, and admire the beauty, excellency, and glory that there is in the great doctrines of the gospel, as the divine perfections shine forth therein, to the utmost. We must also duly consider the importance of those doctrines that are contained therein, and how they are to be improved by us, to our spiritual advantage; and when we find our hearts filled with love to Jesus Christ, in proportion to those greater measures of light, that he is pleased to impart to us, so that we grow in grace as well as in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. iii. 18. then the word may be said to be made effectual to our salvation, as our minds are very much enlightened and improved in the knowledge of those things that lead thereunto.

2. The word is made effectual to bring us under conviction, by which means we see ourselves sinful and miserable creatures; particularly we are hereby led to see those depths of

wickedness that are in our hearts, by nature, which otherwise could not be sufficiently discerned by us, much less improved to our spiritual advantage, Jer. xvii. 9. Rom. vii. 9. Would we take a view of the manifold sins committed in our lives, with all their respective aggravations, so as to lay to heart the guilt that we have contracted hereby, or, if we would be effected with the consideration of the misery that will ensue hereupon; as that, hereby, we not only deserve the wrath and curse of God, but without an interest in forgiving grace, are bound to conclude ourselves liable to it: These things we are led into by the word of God. And if we would know whether these convictions of sin are such as have a more immediate reference to salvation; let us enquire, whether they are attended with that grief and sorrow of heart for the intrinsic evil that there is in sin, as well as the sad consequences thereof? Psal. xxxviii. 18. compared with ver. 4. or, whether, when we have taken this view thereof, we are farther led to enquire after the remedy, and seek forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and strength against those corruptions that we have ground to charge ourselves with, which have so much prevailed over us? Acss xvi. 30. Psal. xix. 13. xxv. 11. Jer. viii. 22.

3. The word is made effectual to salvation, when what is contained therein tends to humble and lay us low at the foot of God; when we acknowledge, that all his judgments are right, or whatever punishments have been inflicted, pursuant to the threatenings which he has denounced, have been less than our iniquities deserve, Ezra ix. 13. And when we receive reproofs for sins committed, with a particular application thereof to ourselves, and are sensible of the guilt we have contracted thereby.

But that we may make a right use of the word, to answer this great end, let us consider, what humbling considerations are contained therein, that may have a tendency to answer this end.

(1.) The word of God represents to us that infinite distance that there is between him and us; so that the best of creatures are, in his sight, *as nothing*, Isa. xl. 17. *less than nothing, and vanity*. Herein we behold God as infinitely perfect, and men as very imperfect, and unlike to him; and in particular, we behold him as a God of infinite holiness, spotless purity, and ourselves as impure, polluted creatures; which is a very humbling consideration, Prov. xxx. 2. Isa. lxiv. 6.

(2.) The word of God discovers to us the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness that there is in our hearts, whereby we are naturally inclined to rebel against him; and should, had it not been for his preventing and renewing grace, have run with



the vilest of men, in all excess of riot. It also leads us into the knowledge of the various kinds of sin, which we have ground to charge ourselves with, in the course of our lives; the frequent omission of those duties which are required of us; our great neglect of relative duties, in the station in which God has fixed us; and the injury we have done to others hereby, whom we have caused to stumble, or fall by our example, or, at least, by our unconcernedness about their spiritual welfare. It also discovers to us the various aggravations of sins committed, as they are against light, love, mercies, and manifold engagements, which we are laid under; and the great contempt which we have cast on the blessed Jesus, in disregarding, or not improving, the benefits of his mediation. All these things duly considered, have a tendency to humble us, and we are led into the discovery hereof by the word of God.

4. The word of God is made effectual to salvation, as it has a tendency to drive sinners out of themselves, and to draw them to Jesus Christ. On the one hand, it shews them the utter impossibility of their saving themselves, by doing any thing that may bring them into a justified state, and so render them accepted in the sight of God; and, on the other hand, it draws or leads them to Christ, whom they are enabled to behold by faith, as discovered in the gospel, to be a merciful and all-sufficient Saviour. The former of these is not only antecedent, but necessary to the latter: For, so long as we fancy that we have a sufficiency in ourselves, to recommend us to God, and procure for us a right and title to eternal life, we shall never think of committing our souls into Christ's hand, in order to our obtaining salvation from him in his own way. Thus the prophet brings in a self-conceited people as saying, *We are lords, we will come no more to thee*, Jer. ii. 31. No one will seek help or safety from Christ, who is not sensible of his own weakness, and being in the utmost danger without him. The first thing then that the Spirit of God does in the souls of men, when he makes the word effectual to salvation, is, his leading them into a humble sense of their utter inability to do what is spiritually good, or acceptable to God, or to make atonement for the sins that they have committed against him; that so they might be brought into a justified state. It is, indeed, an hard matter to convince the sinner of this; for he is very prone to be full of himself, sometimes to glory with the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11. in some religious duties he performs; at other times in his abstaining from those gross enormities that others are chargeable with: Or, if he will own himself to have exceeded many in sin; yet he is ready to think, that, by some expedient or other, he shall be able to make atonement for it. This sets



him at a great distance from Christ ; as it is said, *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*, Matt. ix. 12. So these do not see their need of a Saviour, till they are convinced that they have nothing in themselves that can afford any relief to them, so as to deliver them from the guilt of sin, and the misery that will ensue thereupon. On this account our Saviour observes, that *publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God*, chap. xxi. 31. i. e. are more easily made sensible of their need of Christ, being convinced of sin, when the *chief priests and elders*, who thought they had a righteousness of their own to justify them, and therefore refused to comply with the method of the gospel, in having recourse to Christ alone for this privilege.

Now the word of God is made use of by the Spirit, to drive the sinner out of these strong holds, and to shew him that he cannot, by any means recover himself out of that state of sin and misery, into which he is plunged. It is a very hard thing for a person to be convinced of the truth of what our Saviour says, viz. *That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is an abomination in the sight of God*, Luke xvi. 15. when it is put in the room of Christ and his righteousness. This is one of the great ends to which the word is made subservient when rendered effectual to salvation.

Moreover, the word of God draws the soul to Christ, so that it is persuaded and induced, from gospel-motives, to come to him ; and, at the same time, enabled so to do by the almighty power of God, without which he cannot come to him, John vi. 44. the former draws objectively, the latter subjectively and internally.

As to what the gospel does in order hereunto, let it be considered, that it sets before us the excellency and glory of Christ, as our great Mediator ; represents him as a divine person, and, consequently, the object of faith, and as such, *able to save, to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him*, Heb. vi. 25. It considers him as having purchased salvation for his people ; so that they may obtain forgiveness through his blood. It also discovers him as not only able, but willing to save all that come to him by faith ; so that he will in no wise cast them out, John vi. 37. It also represents him as having a right to us ; we are his by purchase ; and therefore it is our indispensable duty to give up ourselves unto him. It also makes known to us the greatness of his love, as the highest inducement hereunto ; the freeness, riches and extensiveness of his grace, as ready to embrace the chief of sinners, and pass by all the injuries that they have done against him, and as giving them the utmost assurance, that, having loved them in the world, he will love them to the end. Thus Christ is set forth in the gospel ;

and when it is made effectual to salvation, the soul is induced, or, as it were, constrained hereby, to love him, and yield the obedience of faith unto him in all things.

5. The word is made of use by the Spirit, as a means to conform the soul to the image of God, and subdue it to his will. The image of God in man, is defaced by sin; so that he is not only rendered unlike, but averse to him, stripped of all his beauty, and become abominable and filthy in his sight; and, as long as he remains so, is unmeet for communion with, or obtaining salvation from him. Now, when the Spirit of God communicates special grace to sinners, he instamps this image afresh upon the soul, which he renews in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, sanctifies all the powers and faculties thereof, and subdues the will, so that it yields a cheerful obedience to the will of God, and delights in his law after the inward man; and its language is, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*. This change the Spirit of God works in the heart, by his internal efficacious influence; as has been formerly observed, when we considered the work of conversion and sanctification, as brought about by him \*. And this effect is also ascribed to the word as a moral instrument thereof; so that it is not attained without it, it being, indeed, the principal end of the preaching the gospel; as the apostle says, *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.* and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

6. The word is farther said to be made effectual to salvation, as hereby we are strengthened against temptation, and corruption. By the former, those objects are presented to us that have a tendency to alienate our affections from God; by the latter, these temptations are complied with, and the affections entangled in the snare that is laid for them, Satan, or the world, present the bait, and corrupt nature is easily allured and taken by it. The tempter uses many wiles and stratagems to ensnare us, and our own hearts are deceitful above all things, and without much difficulty, turned aside thereby; and so led captive by Satan at his will. But when the Spirit of God makes the word effectual to salvation, he takes occasion hereby to detect the fallacy; lays open the design of our spiritual enemies, and the pernicious tendency thereof; and internally fortifies the soul against them, whereby it is *kept from the paths of the destroyer*, Psal. xvii. 4. and this he does by presenting other and better objects to engage our affections, and leading us into the knowledge of those glorious truths, that may prevent a sinful

\* See Quest. lxvii, lxviii. Vol. III. p. 16.

compliance with the solicitations of the devil. And, according to the nature of the temptation that may occur, we are directed to the precepts or promises contained in the word of God; which, being duly improved by us, have a tendency to keep the heart steady, and fixed in the ways of God.

7. The word of God is made effectual by the Spirit, as he thereby builds the soul up in grace, and establishes it in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation. The work of grace is not immediately brought to perfection, but is, in a progressive way, making advances towards it; and therefore we are first made holy by the renovation of our hearts and lives, and made partakers of those spiritual consolations that accompany or flow from the work of sanctification; and then we are built up in holiness and comfort, whereby we go from strength to strength, and are more and more established in the ways of God; and this is done by the preaching of the word, whereby we are said to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. so that every step we take in our way to heaven, from the time that our faces are first turned towards it, we are enabled hereby to go on safely and comfortably, till the work of grace is perfected in glory.

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**QUEST. CLVI.** *Is the word of God to be read by all?*

**ANSW.** Although all are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation, yet all sorts of people are bound to read it apart by themselves, and with their families, to which end the holy scriptures are to be translated out of the original, into vulgar languages.

**QUEST. CLVII.** *How is the word of God to be read?*

**ANSW.** The holy scriptures are to be read, with an high and reverend esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them, with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them, with diligence and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.

**T**HE word's being made effectual to salvation, which was the subject last insisted on, not only supposes that we read it as translated into vulgar languages, but that we understand what we read, in order to our applying it to our particular case, and improving it for our spiritual advantage. These

things are next to be considered as contained in the answers we are now to explain. Accordingly,

I. We have an account, in the former of them, of the obligation that all persons are under to read, or at least, attend to the reading of the word of God; more particularly,

1. It is to be read publicly in the congregation, by those who are appointed for that purpose. This is evident, inasmuch as the church, and all the public worship that is performed therein, is founded on the doctrines contained in scripture; and every one who would be made wise to salvation, ought to be well acquainted with it; and the reading it publicly, as a part of that worship that is performed in the church, is not only a testimony of the high esteem that we have for it; but it will be of great use to those, who, through a sinful neglect to read it in families, and their not being disposed to do this in their private retirement; or, through the stupidity of their hearts, and the many incumbrances of worldly business, will not allow themselves time for this necessary duty, by reason whereof they remain strangers to those great and important truths contained therein.

That this is a duty appears from the charge that the apostle gives, that the epistle which he wrote to the church at Thessalonica, should *be read unto all the holy brethren*, 1 Thess. v. 27. And he gives the like charge to the church at Colosse, Col. iv. 16. And to this we may add, that the scripture is not only to be read, but explained; which is the principal design of the preaching thereof. This is no new practice; for the Old Testament was not only read, but explained in the synagogues *every Sabbath-day*; which is called, by a metonymy, *a reading Moses*, Acts xv. 21. *viz.* explaining the law that was given by him. Thus Ezra *stood upon a pulpit of wood, opened the book in the sight of all the people*; and he, with some other of his brethren that assisted him herein, *read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading*, that is, the meaning thereof, Neh. viii. 4,—8. In like manner our Saviour *went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up and read*, that part of the holy scriptures, taken from the prophecy of Isaiah; which, when he had done, he applied it to himself, and shewed them how *it was fulfilled in their ears*, Luke iv. 16,—24. So that it is supposed that the word is to be publicly read.

The only thing in this answer, that needs explaining is, what is meant by those words, *all are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation*. We are not to suppose that there is an order of men that Christ has appointed to be readers in the church, distinct from ministers; therefore the meaning of this expression may be, that all are not to read the

word of God together, in a public assembly; with a loud voice; for that would tend rather to confusion than edification. Nor ought any to be appointed to do it, but such as are grave, pious, and able to read it distinctly, for the edification of others. And who is so fit for this work, as the minister whose office is not only to read, but explain it in the ordinary course of his ministry?

2. The word of God is to be read in our families; which is absolutely necessary for the propagating religion therein. This, indeed, is shamefully neglected; which is one great reason of the ignorance and decay of piety in the rising generation; and the neglect hereof is contrary to God's command, Deut. vi. 6, 7. as well as the example of those who are highly commended for this practice; as Abraham was for *commanding his children, and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord*, Gen. xviii. 19. Psal. lxxviii. 3, 4.

3. The word of God ought to be read by every one, in private; and that not only occasionally, but frequently as one of the great businesses of life. Thus God says to Joshua, Josh. i. 8. *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night*, Psal. i. 2. And our Saviour commands the Jews to *search the scriptures*, John v. 39. and, in some of his discourses with them, though he was sensible that they were a degenerate people; yet he takes it for granted, that they had not altogether laid aside this duty, Matt. xii. 5. chap. xxi. 42. Luke vi. 3. This practice, especially where the word of God has not only been read, but the meaning thereof sought after, and attended to with great diligence, is commended as a peculiar excellency in Christians, who are, in this respect, styled more *noble* than others, who are defective in this duty, Acts xvii. 11.

Now it appears, that it is the duty of every one to read the word of God, inasmuch as it is given us with this design. If God is pleased, as it were, to send us an epistle from heaven, it is a very great instance of contempt cast on it, as well as on the divine condescension expressed therein, for us to neglect to read it. Does he impart his mind to us herein, and is it not our indispensable duty, to pay the utmost regard thereto? Rev. i. 11. compared with chap. ii. 29. Moreover, our own advantage should be a farther inducement to us, to read the word of God; since his design in giving it, was, that we might believe, and that believing, we may attain life, through the name of Christ, John xx. 31. Rom. x. 17. chap. xv. 4. It is sometimes compared to a *sword*, for our defence, against our spiritual enemies, Eph. vi. 17. and is therefore designed for use; otherwise it is no advantage for us. It is elsewhere compared to a *lamp to our feet*, Psal. cxix. 105. which is not

designed for an ornament, but to guide us in the right way; therefore we must attend to its direction. It is also compared to *food*, whereby we are said to be *nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine*, and as *new-born babes* we are exhorted, to *desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. but this end cannot be attained, unless it be read and applied by us to our own necessities.

This leads us to take notice of the opposition that the Papists make hereunto, inasmuch as they deny the common people the liberty of reading the scriptures in their own language, without leave given them from the bishop, or some other spiritual guides, who are authorized to allow or deny this privilege, as they think fit; but without this, the reading of it is strictly prohibited. And, as an instance of their opposition to it, they have sometimes burnt whole impressions of the Bible, in the open market-place; as well as expressed their contempt hereof, by burning particular copies of scripture, or dragging them through the streets, throwing them in the kennels, and stamping them under feet, or tearing them in pieces, as though it was the vilest book in the world; and some have been burned for reading it. And, that it may be brought into the utmost contempt, they have cast the most injurious reproaches upon it, by calling it a bending rule, a nose of wax, a dumb judge. And some have blasphemed it, by saying, that it has no more authority than Esop's fables; and have compared the psalms of David to profane ballads. And, they pretend, by all this, to consult the good of the people, that they may not be misled thereby.

That which they generally allege in vindication of this practice, is, that they do not so much oppose the reading the scripture, as the reading those translations of it, which have been made by Protestants; and that it is our Bible, not that which they allow to be the word of God, that they treat with such injurious contempt.

But to this it may be replied; that the objections they bring against scripture, are not taken so much from such passages thereof, which they pretend to be falsely translated; but their design is, plainly, to keep the people in ignorance, that they may not, as the consequence of their reading it, imbibe those doctrines, that will, as they pretend, turn them aside from the faith of the church; and therefore, they usually maintain, that the common people ought to be kept in ignorance, as an expedient to excite devotion; and that, by this means, they will be the more humble, and pay a greater deference to those unwritten traditions that are propagated by them, and pretended to be of equal authority with scripture, which the common people must take up with instead of it. And, indeed, the



consequence hereof, is agreeable to their desire; for they appear to be grossly ignorant, and think themselves bound to believe whatever their leaders pretend to be true, without exercising a judgment of discretion, or endeavouring to know the mind of God relating thereto.

That which they generally allege in opposing the common people's reading the Bible, is, that it contains *some things* in it that are *hard to be understood*; as the apostle Peter expresses it, in 2 Pet. iii. 16. *which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

But to this it may be replied; that it must be allowed that some things contained in scripture, are hard to be understood; inasmuch as the gospel contains some mysteries which finite wisdom cannot comprehend; and the great doctrines of the gospel, are sometimes unintelligible by us, by reason of the ignorance and alienation of our minds from the life of God, as well as from the imperfections of this present state, in which we know but in part. Notwithstanding, they, who with diligence and humility, desire, and earnestly seek after the knowledge of those truths that are more immediately subservient to their salvation, shall find that their labour is not lost; but in following on to know the Lord, shall know as much of him as is necessary to their glorifying and enjoying him, as the prophet says, *Then shall ye know if ye follow on to know the Lord*, Hos. vi. 3. It is to be owned, that there are some depths in scripture, that cannot be fathomed by a finite understanding; which should tend to raise our admiration, and put us upon adoring the unsearchable wisdom of God, as well as an humble confession that *we are but of yesterday, and know, comparatively, nothing*, Job viii. 9. Yet there are many doctrines that we may attain to a clear knowledge of, and improve, to the glory of God, in the conduct of our lives. Thus the prophet speaks of an *high way*, that is called *the way of holiness*; concerning which it is said, that *way-faring men*, who walk therein, *though fools*, that is, such as have the meanest capacity, as to other things, *shall not err therein*, Isa. xxxv. 8. that is, they who humbly desire the teaching of the Spirit, whereby they may be made acquainted with the mind and will of God, shall not be led out of the way by any thing that he has revealed to his people in his word. It is very injurious to the sacred oracles to infer, that because some things are hard to be understood, therefore all that read them, must necessarily wrest them to their own destruction. And besides, the apostle does not say, that all do so, but only those who are *unlearned and unstable*; *unlearned*, that is, altogether unacquainted with the doctrines of the gospel, as not making them



the matter of their study and enquiry; and *unstable*, that is, such as give way to scepticism, or they whose faith is not built on the right foundation, but are inclined to turn aside from the truth, with every wind of doctrine. This God's people may hope to be kept from, while they study the holy scriptures, and earnestly desire to be made wise thereby unto salvation.

As to what the Papists farther allege against the common people's being permitted to read the scriptures, because, as they pretend, this will make them proud, and induce them to enquire into those things that do not belong to them, whereby they will soon think themselves wiser than their teachers; and that it has been the occasion of all the heresies that are in the world.

To this it may be answered, that whatever ill consequences attend a person's reading of scripture, these are not to be ascribed to the use, but the abuse of it. Will any one say, that we ought to abstain from eating and drinking, because some are guilty of excess therein, by gluttony and drunkenness? No more ought we to abstain from reading the scriptures, because some make a wrong use of them. But, inasmuch as it is supposed that hereby some, through pride, will think themselves wiser than their teachers; this, we will allow, they may do, without passing a wrong judgment on themselves; and it is injurious treatment of mankind, to keep the world in ignorance, that they may not detect the fallacies, or expose the errors of those who pretend to be their guides in matters of faith.

As to what is farther alleged, that the reading of scripture has been the occasion of many heresies in the world, I am rather inclined to think, that this ought to be charged on the neglect thereof, or, at least, on their not studying them with diligence, and an humble dependence on God for his blessing to attend it.

It may be observed, that whatever reasons are assigned for their denying the people the liberty of reading the scriptures, these seem to carry in them a pretence of great kindness to them, that they may not, hereby, be led out of the way, and do themselves hurt by this means; as it is a dangerous thing to put a knife, or a sword, into a child's, or madman's hand; by which they suppose the common people to be ignorant, and would keep them so. But, whatever reasons they assign, the true reason why they so much oppose the reading of scripture is this, because it detects and exposes the absurdity of many doctrines that are imbibed by them, which will not bear to be tried by it. If they can but persuade their votaries, that whatever is handed down by tradition, as a rule of faith, is to

be received, without the least hesitation, though contrary to the mind of God in scripture, they are not like to meet with any opposition from them, let them advance doctrines never so absurd, or contrary to reason.

If it be enquired, whether they universally prohibit the reading of scripture? It must be allowed, that the Vulgar Latin version thereof may be read by any one that understands it, without falling under their censure. But this they are sensible of, that the greatest part of the common people cannot understand it; and if they do, it is so corrupt a translation, that it seems plainly calculated to give countenance to the errors that they advance\*. So that it appears from their whole management herein, that their design is to deprive mankind of the greatest blessings which God has granted to them; and to discourage persons from the performance of a duty, which is so absolutely necessary to promote the interest of God and religion in the world. Therefore we must conclude, that it is an invaluable privilege that we are not only permitted, but commanded to read the scriptures, as translated into that language that is generally understood by us.

And this leads us to consider the inference that is deduced from hence, contained in the latter part of the answer which we are explaining, viz. that the scriptures are to be translated out of the original into vulgar languages. This is evident, inasmuch as reading signifies nothing, where the words are not understood; and every private Christian is not obliged to addict himself to the study of the languages in which the scriptures were written; and it is, indeed, a work of so much pains and difficulty, that few have opportunity, or inclination, to apply themselves, to any considerable purpose, to the study thereof. Therefore, the words of scripture must be rendered intelligible to all, and consequently, translated into a language they understand.

This may be argued from the care of providence, that the scriptures should be delivered, at first, to the Jews, in their own language; as the greatest part of the Old Testament was

\* *Many instances of this might be produced, viz. Gen. iii. 13. instead of, it shall bruise thy head, they render it she; by which they understand the Virgin Mary, shall bruise thy head, that is, the serpent's. And, Gen. xlviii. 16. instead of, my name shall be named on them, which are the words of Jacob, concerning Joseph's sons; it is rendered, my name shall be invoked, or called upon by them; which favours the doctrine of invocation of saints. And, in Psal. xcix. 5. instead of, exalt the Lord thy God, and worship at his holy hill, they read, worship his footstool; which gives countenance to their error of paying divine adoration to places or things. And, in Heb. xi. 21. instead of, Jacob worshipped leaning on the top of his staff, they render it, he worshipped the top of his staff. And, in Heb. xiii. 16. instead of, with such sacrifices God is well pleased, they render it, with such sacrifices God is merited: which they make use of to establish the merit of good works.*

written in Hebrew, and those few sections or chapters in Ezra and Daniel, that were written in the Chaldee language, were not inserted till they understood that language \*. And, when the world generally understood the Greek tongue, so that there was no necessity for the common people to learn it in schools, and the Hebrew was not understood by those nations, for whom the gospel was designed; it pleased God to deliver the New Testament in the Greek language. So that it is beyond dispute that he intended, that the scriptures should not only be read, but understood by the common people. And when the gospel was sent to various nations of different languages, the Spirit of God, by an extraordinary and miraculous dispensation, furnished the apostles to speak to every one in their own language, by bestowing on them the gift of tongues; which would have been needless, if it were not necessary for persons to read or hear the holy scriptures with understanding.

II. We are now to consider, how the word of God is to be read, that we may understand, and improve what is contained therein to our spiritual advantage; and in order thereunto, there are several directions given in the latter of the answers we are explaining.

1. We must read the scriptures with an high and reverent esteem of them, arising from a firm persuasion, that they are the word of God. That they are so, has been proved by several arguments †; therefore we will suppose them that read them, to be persuaded of the truth thereof; and this will beget an high and reverent esteem of them. The perfections of God, and particularly his wisdom, sovereignty, and goodness, shine forth with equal glory in his word, as they do in any of his works; and therefore it has a preference to all human compositions; in that whatever is revealed therein, is to be admired and depended on for its unerring wisdom and infallible verity; so that it is impossible for them, who understand and improve it, to be turned aside thereby, from the way of truth. We are also to consider the use that God makes of it, to propagate his kingdom and interest in the world. It is by this means that he convinces men of sin, and discovers to them the way of obtaining forgiveness of it, and victory over it, and thoroughly furnishes them unto every good work, 2 Tim. iii. 16. For this reason the wisest and best of men have express-

\* There is indeed, one verse in Jeremiah, chap. x. 11. that is written in Chaldee; which, it is probable, they did not, at that time, well understand; but the prophet, by this, intimates to them, that they should be carried into a country where that language should be used; and therefore the Holy Ghost furnishes them with a message, that they were to deliver to the Chaldeans, from the Lord, in their own language. The gods, that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from these heavens.

† See Vol. I. Quest. iv. p. 69, & seq.

ed the highest esteem and value for it. The Psalmist mentions the love he had to it, as a person that was in a rapture; *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day*, Psal. cxix. 97. And elsewhere he speaks of it as *more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey comb*, Psal. xix. 16. which argues the high veneration he had for it. This we all ought to have; otherwise we may sometimes be tempted to read it with prejudice, and thereby, through the corruption of our nature, be prone to cavil at it, as we sometimes do at those writings that are merely human, which savour of the weakness and imperfection of their authors, and consequently, it will be impossible for us to receive any saving advantage thereby.

2. We must, in reading the word of God, be sensible that he alone can enable us to understand it. To read the scriptures and not understand them, will be of no advantage to us; therefore it is supposed, that we are endeavouring to have our minds rightly informed and furnished with the knowledge of divine truths: But by reason of the corruption, ignorance, and depravity of our natures, this cannot be attained without a peculiar blessing from God attending our endeavours; therefore we ought to glorify him, by dependence on him, for this privilege, (as being sensible that all spiritual wisdom is from him,) if we would see a beauty and glory in those things that are revealed therein, and be thoroughly established in the doctrines of the gospel, so as not to be in danger of being turned aside from them; or, especially, if we would improve them to our being made wise unto salvation, we must consider this as the gift of God. It is he alone who can enable us to understand his word aright; this is evident, inasmuch as it is necessary that there be an internal illumination, as well as an external revelation, which is the subject-matter of our studies and enquiries. Thus our Saviour not only repeated the words of those scriptures that concerned himself, to the two disciples going to Emmaus; but he *opened their understandings, that they might understand them*, Luke xxiv. 45. Without this, a person may have the brightest parts, and most penetrating judgment in other respects, and yet be unacquainted with the mind of God in his word, and inclined to embrace those doctrines that are contrary to it; and especially if God is not pleased to succeed our endeavours, we shall remain destitute of the experimental knowledge of divine truths, which is absolutely necessary to salvation.

3. We must read the word of God with a desire to know, believe, and obey his will, contained therein. If we do not desire to know, or understand the meaning of scripture, it will remain no better than a sealed book to us; and, instead of re-

ceiving thereby, we shall be ready to entertain prejudices against it, till we lay it aside, with the utmost dislike ; and, as the consequence thereof, we shall be utterly estranged from the life of God, through the ignorance and vanity of our minds. We must also read the word of God with a desire to have our faith established thereby, that our feet may be set upon a rock, and we may be delivered from all manner of doubts and hesitations, with respect to those important truths which are revealed therein ; and we ought to desire, not only to believe, but yield a constant and cheerful obedience to every thing that God requires of us therein.

4. Our reading the word of God ought to be accompanied with meditation, and the exercise of self-denial. Our thoughts should be wholly taken up with the subject-matter thereof, and that with the greatest intenseness, as those who are studiously, and with the greatest earnestness, pressing after the knowledge of those doctrines that are of the highest importance, that our profiting herein may appear to ourselves and others, I 1 Tim. iv. 15.

As to the exercise of self-denial, all those perverse reasonings which our carnal minds are prone to suggest against the subject-matter of divine revelation, are to be laid aside. If we are resolved to believe nothing but what we can comprehend, we ought to consider that the gospel contains unsearchable mysteries, that surpass finite wisdom ; therefore we must be content to acknowledge, that we know but in part. There is a deference to be paid to the wisdom of God, that eminently appears in every thing which he has discovered to us in his word ; so that we must adore the divine perfections that are displayed therein, whilst we retain an humble sense of the imperfection of our own knowledge. Our reason is not to be considered as useless ; but we must desire that it may be sanctified, and inclined to receive whatever God is pleased to impart. We are also to exercise the grace of self-denial, with respect to the obstinacy of our wills ; whereby they are naturally disinclined to acquiesce in, approve of, and yield obedience to the law of God, so that we may be entirely satisfied, that every thing that he commands in his word, is holy, just, and good.

5. The word of God is to be read with fervent prayer ; as the apostle says, *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him,* James i. 5. The advantage we expect hereby, is as was before observed, his gift ; and therefore we are humbly to supplicate him for it. There are many things in his word that are hard to be understood ; therefore we ought to say, whenever we take the scriptures into our hands, as the

Psalmist does, *Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law*, Psal. cxix. 18. We may, in this case, humbly acknowledge the weakness of our capacities and the blindness of our minds, which renders it necessary for us to desire to be instructed by him, in the way of truth. We may also plead, that his design in giving us this word, was, that it may be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths; therefore we dread the thoughts of walking in darkness, when there is such a clear discovery of those things which are so glorious and necessary to be known. We may also plead, that our Lord Jesus is revealed to his people as the prophet of his church; and that whatever office he is invested with, he delights to execute it, as his glory is concerned therein; therefore we trust, and hope that he will lead us, by his Spirit into his truth. We may also plead the impossibility of our attaining the knowledge of divine things, without his assistance; and how much it would redound to his glory, as well as our own comfort and advantage, if he will be pleased to lead us into the saving knowledge of the truth, as it is in him: This we cannot but importunately desire, as being sensible of the sad consequences of our being destitute of it; inasmuch as we should remain in darkness, though favoured with the light of the gospel.

6. The word of God is to be read with diligence and attention to the matter and scope thereof. We have hitherto been directed in this answer, to apply ourselves to the reading of scripture, with that frame of spirit which becometh Christians, who desire to know the mind and will of God therein, viz. that we ought to have our minds disengaged from those prejudices which would hinder our receiving any advantage from it, and to exercise those graces that the nature and importance of the duty requires; that we ought to depend upon God, and address ourselves to him by faith and prayer for the knowledge of those divine truths contained therein. But, in this last head, we are led to speak of some other methods conducive to our understanding the scriptures; which are the effects of diligence and attendance to the sense of the words thereof, and the scope and design of them.

This being an useful head, I shall take occasion to enlarge on it more than I have done on the former, and to add some other things, which may serve as a farther means to direct us, how we may read the scriptures with understanding. I might here observe, that they who are well acquainted with the languages in which they were written, and are able to make just remarks on the words, phrases, and particles used therein, some of which cannot be expressed in another language without losing much of their native beauty and significancy, these



have certainly the advantage of all others : But since this cannot be done by the greatest part of mankind, who are strangers to the Greek and Hebrew languages ; they must have recourse to some other helps for the attaining this valuable end. And in order thereunto,

(1.) It will be of great use for them to consult those expositions, which we have of the whole, or some particular parts of scripture ; of which some are more large, others concise ; some critical, others practical. I shall forbear making any remarks tending to depreciate the performance of some, or extol the judgment of others ; only this must be observed, that many have passed over some difficulties of scripture, which omission has given a degree of disgust to the more inquisitive part of Christians : But this may be attributed in some instances, to a commendable modesty, which we find not only in those that have written in our own, but in other languages ; whereby they tacitly confess, either that they could not solve the difficulty ; or, that it was better to leave it undetermined, than to attempt a solution, which, at best, would amount to little more than a probable conjecture. It may also be observed, that others, who have commented on scripture, seem to be prepossessed with a particular scheme of doctrine, which, if duly considered, is not very defensible ; and they are obliged, sometimes, to strain the sense thereof, that it may appear to speak agreeably to their own sentiments ; however, their expositions, in other respects, may be used with great advantage.

To this we may add, that the word preached, being designed to lead us into the knowledge of scripture-doctrines, we ought to attend upon, and improve it, as a means conducive thereto, and to bless God for the great helps and advantages we have to attain it ; but more of this will be considered under some following answers relating to the preaching and hearing the word : \* therefore we proceed to consider,

(2.) That we ought to make the best use we can of those translations of scripture, that we have in our own language ; which, if we compare together, we shall find, not only that the style in which one is written, differs from that of another, agreeably to the respective times in which they were written ; but they differ very much in the sense they give of many places of scripture ; which may easily be accounted for from the various acceptations of the same Hebrew or Greek word, as may be observed in all other languages ; and there are other difficulties relating to the propriety of translating some particular phrases, or the various senses in which several particles made use of, are to be understood. However, by comparing

\* See Quest. clix. clx.



these translations together, they who are unacquainted with the original, will be sometimes led into a sense more agreeable to the context and the analogy of faith, by one of them, than by another. But we will suppose the English reader to confine himself to the translation that is generally used by us ; which, as it cannot be supposed to be of equal authority with the original, nor yet so perfect, as that it is impossible to be corrected, as to every word or phrase contained therein ; yet I would be far from taking occasion from hence to depreciate it, or say any thing that may stagger the faith of any, as though we were in danger of being led aside thereby, from the way of truth, as some have pretended, who plead for the necessity of a new translation of the Bible ; whereas it is much to be feared, that if any such thing should be attempted, it would deviate more from the sense of the Holy Ghost, than that which we now have, and have reason to bless God for, which, I cannot but think, comes as near the original as most that are extant. We shall therefore consider how this may be used to the best advantage, for our understanding the mind of God therein. And here we shall observe,

[1.] That there is another translation of words referred to in the margin of our Bibles ; which will sometimes give very great light to the sense of the text, and appear more emphatical, and rather to be acquiesced in. I shall give a short specimen of some texts of scripture, that may be illustrated this way ; in which the marginal reading differs from the words it refers to : Thus it is said, in Job iv. 18. *He put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly* : In the margin, it is observed, that the words may be read, *He put no trust in his servants, nor in his angels in whom he put light* ; which denotes the excellency of their nature, and the wisdom with which they are endowed : Nevertheless, God put no trust in them, not having thought fit to make use of them in creating the world, nor committing the government thereof to them.

Again, in Isaiah liii. 8. it is said, *We hid, as it were, our faces from him*, speaking of our Saviour ; but in the margin, it is, *He hid, as it were, his face from us* ; which implies, that, as he bore our grief, so he was charged with our guilt ; and accordingly is represented, as having his face covered, as an emblem hereof ; or else it denotes his concealing or veiling his glory, as he, who was really in the form of God, appeared in the form of a servant.

Again, in Jer. xlii. 20. the prophet reproving the people, says, *Ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us* ; but, in the margin, it is, *You have used deceit against your souls* ; which contains a farther illustration of the sense of the words ; as it not only de-

notes their hypocrisy, but the consequence thereof; to wit, their destruction; which agrees very well with the threatening denounced in verse 22. that they should *die by the sword, the famine, and by the pestilence*. And the same prophet in chap. x. 14. speaking of idolaters, says, *Every man is brutish in his knowlege*; but in the margin it is, *Every man is more brutish than to know*; in which their stupidity is rather assigned to their ignorance than their knowlege.

Again, in Zechariah xii. 5. it is said in the text, *The governors of Judah shall say in their hearts, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God*; but in the margin it is, *The governors of Judah shall say, There is strength to me, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in the Lord of hosts*; and this reading seems more agreeable to what follows; which contains several promises of deliverance and salvation, which God would work for the inhabitants of Jerusalem; So that we are not to suppose them saying, *Jerusalem shall be our strength*; but, the *Lord of hosts*, who is a safeguard to it, as well as to the governors of Judah.

Again, in Acts xvii. 23. it is said in the text, *As I passed by, and beheld your devotions*; but, in the margin it is, *The gods whom you worship, or, the things ye pay divine honour to*; which is very agreeable to the context, and the design of the apostle therein. Again, in chap. xxii. 29. it is said in the text, *that they departed from him, which should have examined him*; meaning Paul, in the margin it is, *tortured him*; which is agreeable to the Roman custom of scourging, and thereby tormenting one that was under examination for supposed crimes.

Again, in Gal. i. 14. the apostle says, *I profited in the Jews religion, above many my equals*; in the margin it is, *My equals in years*; which seems much more agreeable to the apostle's design.

Again, in Heb. ii. 7. it is said in the text, *Thou madest him, viz. our Saviour, a little lower than the angels*; in the margin it is, *A little while inferior to them*; as referring to his state of humiliation; which continued comparatively, but a little while.

[2.] In order to our making a right use of our English translation, that we may understand the mind of God contained therein, let it be farther observed, that by reason of the conciseness of the Hebrew and Greek texts, there are several words left out, which must be supplied, to complete the sense thereof; which are inserted in an *Italic* character. And it will not be difficult for us to determine whether the insertion be just or no; when we consider that the translators often take their direction herein from some words, either

expressed or understood in the context; as in Heb. viii. 7. it is said, *If the first covenant had been faultless, &c.* where the word *covenant* is inserted; as it is also in verse 13. because it is expressly mentioned, in verses 8, 9, 10.

Again, in chap. x. 6. it is said, in *sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure*. The word *sacrifices* is supplied from the foregoing verse; and, for the same reason, *offerings* might as well have been supplied, as in ver. 8. And, in ver. 25. we are commanded to *exhort one another*; where *one another* is supplied from the foregoing verse.

Again, in 1 Pet. iv. 16. it is said, *If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed*; where the words, *any man suffer*, are inserted as agreeable to what is mentioned, ver. 15.

And, in Eph. ii. 1. *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins*; the words, *hath he quickened*, are supplied from ver. 5. and our translators might as well have added, *you hath he quickened together with him*, viz. Christ. These things I only mention as a specimen of the insertions, to complete the sense in our translation; and we shall find, that the words supplied in other scriptures, are for the most part, sufficiently just; but if they be not so, they are subject to correction, without the least imputation of altering the words of scripture, while we are endeavouring to give the true sense thereof; and we may be allowed, without perverting of the sacred writings, sometimes, to supply other words instead of them, which may seem more agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost therein. Thus, in Eph. vi. 12. it is said, *We wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places*. The word *places*, is supplied by our translators; and, in the margin, it is observed, that it might as well be rendered *heavenly places*. Now because there is no spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, therefore they choose, without regard to the proper sense of the Greek word, to render it *high places*. Whereas, in chap. iii. 10. where there is no appearance of such an objection, they render the same word, *heavenly places*; though, I think, the words in both those scriptures, might better be rendered *in what concerns heavenly things*.

Again, in 2 Cor. vi. 1. it is said, *We, as workers together with him, beseech you, &c.* where, *with him*, is supplied to complete the sense; but, I think, it might better have been left out, and then the sense would have been, *ministers, are workers together with one another*, and not *together with God*; they are honoured to be employed by God, as moral instruments, which he makes use of; but they have no other causality in bringing about the work of grace. The principal reason why the words *with him*, are supplied, is because it seems agreeable to the apostle's mode of speaking, in 1 Cor. iii. 9.

*We are workers together with God*; but, I think, those words might better be rendered, *labourers together of God* \*; or we are jointly engaged in his work; therefore there is no reason from hence to supply the words *with him*, in the text but now referred to.

(3.) If we would understand the sense of a particular text of scripture, we must consider its connexion with the context. Accordingly we must observe,

1st, The scope, design, or argument insisted on, in the paragraph, in which it is contained. Thus in Rom. viii. the apostle's design in general, is to prove that there is *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, and to shew who they are, that may conclude themselves to be interested in this privilege; together with the many blessings that are connected with, or flow from it, which the subject matter of that chapter principally relates to.

And, in Heb. i. the apostle's principal design is, to prove the excellency and glory of Christ, as Mediator, above the angels, as he intimates ver. 4. which argument is principally insisted on, and illustrated, in the following part of the chapter.

And, in chap. xi. his design is, to give an account of the great things the Old Testament church were enabled to do, and suffer, by faith, of which, there is an induction of particulars in several parts of it.

And, in Rom. v. the apostle insists on the doctrine of original sin, and shews how sin and death first entered into the world, and by what means we may expect to be delivered from it; and so takes occasion to compare Adam and Christ together, as two distinct heads and representatives of those who were included in the respective covenants which mankind were under; by the former of which, sin reigned unto death, and, by the latter, grace and righteousness, unto eternal life.

Again, in chap. vii. especially from ver. 5. the general argument insisted on, is, the conflict and opposition there is between sin and grace, and the manner in which corrupt nature discovers itself in the souls of the regenerate, together with the disturbance and uneasiness that it constantly gives them. And, in Psal. lxxxviii. we have an account of the distress that a soul is in, when under divine desertion, and brought to the very brink of despair. And, in Psal. lxxii. under the type of the glory of Solomon's kingdom, and the advantages his subjects should receive thereby, the glory and excellency of Christ's kingdom is illustrated, together with the gospel-state and blessings thereof. And, in Psal. li. David represents a true penitent as addressing himself to God for forgiveness.

though particularly applied to his own case, after he had sinned in the matter of Uriah. Again, the general argument in Isa. liii. is to set forth the sufferings of Christ, whereby he made satisfaction for sin, together with the glory redounding to himself, and the advantages that believers derive from it.

2dly, We must consider the method made use of in managing the argument; whether by a close way of reasoning and consequences deduced from premises, or, by an explication of what was designed to inform the judgment, and laid down before in a general proposition. Or, whether the principal design of the paragraph be, to regulate the conduct of our lives, awaken our consciences out of a stupid frame, or excite in us becoming affections, agreeable to the subject-matter thereof. And, we are to observe how every part of it is adapted to answer these ends.

3dly, We are to consider who is the person speaking, or spoken to; whether they are the words of God, the church, or the inspired writer; and, whether they are directed to particular persons, or to all men in general? Here we may often observe, that in the same paragraph there is an *apostrophe*, or turning the discourse from one person to another. Nothing is more common than this in the poetical writings of scripture. Thus, in the Psalms of David, sometimes God is represented as speaking to man, and then man as speaking to, or concerning God, as we may observe, in Psal. cxxxvii. 1—4. there is a relation of the church's troubles in Babylon; and, in verses 5 and 6. the Psalmist addresses his discourse to the church; *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.* And, in ver. 7. he speaks to God, praying that he would *remember the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof.* And, in ver. 8, 9. he turns his discourse to Babylon, as a nation destined to destruction.

Again, in Psal. ii. he speaks concerning the *rage* of the *Heathen*, against Christ and his church, and that disappointment and ruin that they should meet with for it. And, in ver. 6. he represents God the Father as speaking concerning Christ; *yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.* And, in ver. 7, 8. Christ is brought in as speaking or making mention of the *decree* of God relating to his character and office, as Mediator, and the success of his kingdom, as extended to the *uttermost parts of the earth*, pursuant to his intercession, which was founded on his satisfaction. And, in ver. 10—12, the Psalmist turns his discourse to those persecuting powers, or the kings of the earth, whom he had spoken of in the former part of the Psalm, and instructs them what methods they should take to escape God's righteous vengeance. Such-

like change of persons speaking, or spoken to, may be observed in many of the Psalms, Psal. xvi. 1, &c. and cxxxiv.

And throughout the whole book of Canticles, there is an inter-changeable discourse between Christ and his church, which is sometimes called his *spouse*, at other times his *sister*; sometimes he speaks to the church, and at other times of it. And, in other places, the church is represented as speaking to him, or to the *daughters of Jerusalem*, namely, those professors of religion, that had little more than a form of godliness. (a)

Again, we often find, that there is a change with respect to the persons speaking, spoken to, or of, in the writings of the prophets, as well as in the poetical writings; as may be observed in Isa. lxiii. throughout the whole chapter. And, in Micah vii. 18, 19, 20. there is a change of persons in almost every sentence; *Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity, &c. He retaineth not his anger for ever; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.*

4thly, We are farther to consider the occasion of what is laid down in any chapter, paragraph, or book of scripture, which we desire to understand. Thus the particular occasion of the book of Lamentations, was the approaching ruin of Judah, and the miseries that they should be exposed to when Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans; as appears by the subject-matter thereof; though, it may be, that which was the more immediate occasion of its being delivered at that time, was, that the prophet might lament the death of good Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. which, probably, he had a peculiar eye to, when he says, *The crown is fallen from our head*, Lam. v. 16. as well as the destruction of the whole nation, which would ensue soon after it, in which their civil and religious liberties would be invaded by their enemies, who would oppress and lead them captive.

And the principal occasion of the apostle's writing the epistle to the Galatians, was, that he might establish some among them, in the faith of the gospel, who were so much disposed to turn aside from him that called them, and embrace another scheme of religion that was subversive of it; as he observes, in chap. i. 6. where, by this *other gospel*, which he dissuades them from turning aside unto, we are to understand those doctrines that they had imbibed from those false teachers who endeavour either to re-establish the observation of the ceremonial law, or to put them upon seeking righteousness and life, from their observing the precepts of the moral law, which tended to overthrow the doctrine of justification by Christ's

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(a) Vide T. Williams on the Song of Solomon.



righteousness; which is a subject often insisted on by the apostle, both in this and his other epistles.

This method of enquiring into the occasion of what is mentioned in particular paragraphs of scripture, will often give light to some things contained therein. Thus we read, in Matt. xxi. 23—27. that the *chief priests and elders* ask our Saviour this question, *By what authority dost thou these things?* which, had it proceeded from an humble mind, desirous to be convinced by his reply to it; or, had he not often, in their hearing, asserted the authority by which he did those things, he would, doubtless, have told them, that he received a commission to do them the Father; and, that every miracle which he wrought, was, as it were, a confirming seal annexed to it. But our Saviour, knowing the design of the question, and the character of the persons that asked it, he does not think fit to make any reply to it, rather chusing to put them to silence, by proposing another question to them, which he knew they would not be forward to answer, relating to the baptism of John, viz. whether it was *from heaven, or of men*. And this was certainly the best method he could have taken; for he dealt with them as cavillers, who were to be put to silence, and made ashamed at the same time.

(4.) In order to our understanding the sense of scripture, we must, so far as it is possible, compare the phrases, or modes of expression, as well as the subject insisted on, with what occurs in other parallel places. Thus, in several of the historical parts of scripture, we have the same history, or, at least, many things tending to illustrate it; as the history of the reign of the kings of Judah and Israel, is the principal subject of the book of Kings and Chronicles; one of which often refers to, as well as explains the other, and, by comparing them together, we shall find, that one gives light to the other. Thus it is said, in 2 Kings xii. 2. that *Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days, wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him*; by which it is intimated, that, after the death of Jehoiada, he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; but this is not particularly mentioned in this chapter, which principally insists on that part of his reign which was commendable. But if we compare it with 2 Chron. xxiv. we have an account of his reign after the death of Jehoiada, how he *set up idolatry*, ver. 17, 18. being instigated hereunto by his princes that flattered, or, as it is expressed, *made obeisance unto him*, and disregarded the prophets sent to testify against these practices; and how he *stoned Zachariah in the court of the house of the Lord*, for his faithful reproof and prophetic intimation of the consequence of the idolatry, in which he *showed the greatest ingratitude, and forgetfulness of the good*



things that had been done for him by his father, who set him on his throne. We have an account of the time when the Syrians came up against him, and how they overcame him with a small company of men; and, that *the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers*, ver. 23, 24.

Again, in the book of Kings, we have but a short history of the reign of Azariah, otherwise called Uzziah, and of his being *smitten by the Lord, so that he was a leper until the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house*, 2 Kings xv. 1—5. but in 2 Chron. xxvi. there is a larger account of him, as successful in war, and of the honour and riches that he gained thereby; and also we have a particular account of the reason of the Lord's smiting him with leprosy, namely, for his invading a branch of the priest's office.

Again, in the history of the reign of Manasseh, in 2 Kings xxi. we have only an account of the vile and abominable part thereof; whereas, in 2 Chron. xxxiii. we have not only an account of his wickedness, but of his repentance, together with the affliction that occasioned it, ver. 12—19.

Moreover, when we read the prophetic writings, we must, for our better understanding them, compare them with the particular history of the reign of those kings, in whose time they prophesied, and the state of the church at that time, their alliances or wars with neighbouring princes, and the sins that they were guilty of, which gave occasion to their being sometimes insulted, and overcome by them, till their ruin was completed in being carried captive into Babylon. Thus when we read Isa. vii. which gives an account of Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, against Ahaz, and contains a prediction of their miscarriage in this attempt; and also, that the king of Assyria should be hired to assist Ahaz, but should, instead thereof, deal deceitfully with him, so that he should deprive Judah of their ornaments, and impoverish, instead of being helpful to them. This we have a farther explication of in the history of Ahaz's reign, in 2 Kings xvi. and 2 Chron. xxviii. (a)

Again, we ought to compare the account of Sennacherib's invading Judah, and the blasphemous insult of Rabshakeh sent for that purpose, together with his defeat, and the remarkable hand of God that brought this about, as an encouragement of Hezekiah's piety, in the xxxvith and xxxviith chapters of Isaiah, with the historial account of the same thing, in 2 Kings xviii. and xix. and 2 Chron. xxxii.

Again, we must compare the Psalms of David with his life, or the state of the church, which is particularly referred to in

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(a) Vide Table of the Order of the Prophecies. Vol. I. p. 55.

some of them; which may be very much illustrated from other scriptures, that have relation to the same dispensations of providence, or contain an historical account thereof. As for those psalms that were penned on particular occasions, mentioned in the respective titles prefixed to them, these will be better understood if we compare the subject-matter thereof with the history they refer to. Moreover, we shall often find, that when the same thing is mentioned in different places of scripture, there is something added in one, which farther illustrates what is contained in the other. Thus, in the account we have of the life of Joseph, in Gen. xxxix. 20. it is said, that he was *put into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were bound*; and, in chap. xli. 14. that he was kept in the *dungeon*, which is the worst part of the prison. But the Psalmist speaking of the same matter, in Psal. cv. 18. adds, that his *feet were hurt with fetters*, and he was *laid in iron*; which contains a farther illustration of the history of his troubles.

Again, when we read in Numb. xi. 31, 32. of God's *feeding Israel*, upon their murmuring in the desert, for want of flesh, *with quails in great abundance*; this is mentioned elsewhere, in Psal. lxxviii. 27. in which we have an account, that these quails were a sort of *feathered fowl*, which could not have been so well understood by the sense of the Hebrew word, which we render *quails* \*. We have also an account, in Exod. xvii. 6. of God's supplying them with *water out of the rock in Horeb*; and if we compare this with Psal. cv. 41. we shall find that this water issued from thence in so large a stream, that it was like a *river*. And the apostle Paul gives farther light to it, when he says, speaking in a figurative way, that *the rock followed them*, 1 Cor. x. 4. that is, the water that ran from it like a river, did not flow in a right line; but, by a continued miracle, changed its course, as they altered their stations, in their various removes from place to place in the wilderness. And he also adds, that God designed it to be a type of Christ.

I might also observe, that there were many things in the life of David, after his expulsion from Saul's court, that would argue him an usurper; inasmuch as he did not barely fly to secure his life, which he might lawfully do, as a private person; but he raised a small army; and accordingly it is said, in 2 Sam. xxii. 2. that every one that was 'in distress, or in debt, or discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over him; and there were with him about

\* The word is *קנא*, which being neither a root to any other word, nor derived from any other root, by which the sense of Hebrew words is generally known, nor found any where in scripture, excepting in those two or three places which refer to this particular dispensation of providence; it is an hard matter to determine the sense of it, without comparing these two scriptures together.—It occurs Numb. xi. 31, 32. Exod. xvi. 13. Psal. cv. 40.

‘four hundred men.’ And Jonathan, who was heir apparent to the crown, is forced to capitulate with, and take an oath of him, that he would grant him his life, as concluding, that he would be king after his father’s death, 1 Sam. xx. 14, 15. compared with the 42. and Saul’s jealousy hereof, which was attended with rage, amounting to a kind of distraction, was not altogether without ground; as he intimates to him, when he tells him, ‘Behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king,’ chap. xxiv. 20. and accordingly, in the following verses, he makes him ‘swear to him, that he would not cut off his seed after him, or destroy his name out of his father’s house.’ Now this could hardly be justified, if we did not consider what we read in another part of scripture, that, before that time, God had taken away the kingdom from Saul, and anointed David to be king in his stead, in 1 Sam. xvi. 13. though he had not the actual possession of it till after Saul’s death.

I might farther observe, that when we read the account contained in the books of Moses, of the ceremonial law, and the various rites and ordinances of divine service contained therein, or meet with any expressions in the Old Testament that refer to it; these ought to be compared with several things that are recorded in the writings of the apostle Paul, and, particularly, a very considerable part of his epistle to the Hebrews\*, in which we have an account of the signification thereof, as ordained to be types of the gospel-dispensation. And, indeed, there are many scriptures of the Old Testament, which will be better understood by comparing them with others that refer to them in the New. Thus it is said, in Isa. xvi. 23. *Unto me every knee shall bow*; which appears to be very agreeable to what is said concerning our Saviour, in Phil. ii. 10. and it is not only spoken of the divine honour that should be paid to him; but it relates, in a peculiar manner, to that glory which all shall ascribe to him, when they stand before his tribunal, as appears by comparing it with Rom. xiv. 10, 11.

Again, when we read, in Isa. vi. 10. of God’s sending the prophet to *make the heart of the people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed*. It is not to be supposed that God is represented hereby as the author of their sin; which will plainly appear, if we compare it with Matt. xiii. 15. in which this text is cited, and farther explained, as it is said, *This people’s heart is waxed fat, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, &c.* And it is also referred to, and explained in the same sense as charging their sin, and the con-

\* See the epistle to the Hebrews, chap. v. to the x. inclusive, and 2 Cor. x. 1--5.

sequence thereof upon themselves, in Acts xxviii. 26, 27. By this method of comparing the Old and New Testament together, we shall be led to see the beautiful harmony of the scriptures, and how the predictions thereof have been accomplished; which will tend very much to establish our faith in the truth of the Christian religion, that is founded on them. But this having been insisted on elsewhere \*, we pass it over at present, and proceed to consider,

That there are several places, in the New Testament, which being compared together, will give light to one another. Thus, in the four Evangelists, which contain the history of the life and death of Christ, we may observe, that some things are left out, or but briefly hinted at in one of them, which are more largely insisted on in another. Thus we read, in Matt. xii. 14, 15. that 'the Pharisees went out and held a counsel against our Saviour, how they might destroy him;' upon which occasion 'he withdrew himself from thence. And great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.' But Mark, chap. iii. 17, & seq. speaking concerning the same thing, intimates that the Herodians were joined with the Pharisees in this conspiracy; and that he 'withdrew himself to the sea,' viz. of Tiberias; where he ordered that 'a small ship should wait on him, lest the multitude should throng him.' And we have also an account of several places from whence they came, namely, Galilee, Jerusalem, Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they about Tyre and Sidon, so that a great part of them were Gentiles; and this gives light to what follows in Matt. xii. 18, 21. in which it is intimated, that this was an accomplishment of what was foretold by the prophet *Isaias*, that he should shew judgment to the Gentiles; and that, in his name should the Gentiles trust; therefore he wrought miracles for their conviction that he was the Messias.

Again, it is said, in Matt. xiii. 12. 'Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away, even that he hath.' Some will be ready to enquire, how can that which he hath be said to be taken away, when he is supposed to have nothing? or, how can a person be said to lose that which he never had? But if compare this with a parallel scripture, in Luke viii. 18. there it is said, *Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken, even that which he seemeth to have; or, as it is in the margin, that which he thinketh he hath.* Now, though a man cannot lose grace, that had it not; yet an hypocrite, who seems to have it, may lose that which he supposeth himself to have.

\* See Vol. I. p. 78.

This method of comparing the four Evangelists together, is attempted by several divines; and, among them, a late writer, who is deservedly esteemed by all the reformed churches\*, thinks, that the inscription, on the cross of Christ, can hardly be determined, without what is said of it, by all the four Evangelists. Mark says these words were written, *The king of the Jews*, Mark xv. 26. and Luke says, *This is the king of the Jews*, Luke xxiii. 38. and Matthew adds another word, *This is Jesus, the king of the Jews*, Matt. xxvii. 37. and John expresses it thus, *Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews*, John xix. 19. So that, by comparing them all together, and supplying those words from one, which are left out by others of them, we must conclude, that the inscription was, *This is Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews*.

Again, as the Acts of the Apostles contains a brief history of the first planting the gospel-church, and of the travels and ministry of the apostle Paul, in particular; this ought to be compared with some things, occasionally mentioned in his epistles, which will give farther light to them. Thus the apostle says, in 1 Cor. xv. 8. *Last of all, he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time*; and speaks of himself in ver. 9. *as the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle; because he persecuted the church of God*. This ought to be compared with Acts ix. 1—6. which gives an account of him as a persecutor before his conversion, and shews how our Saviour was seen of him; which is not to be taken in the same sense as he was seen by the rest of the apostles, before his ascension into heaven; but of his being seen of him, after his ascension, when, on this occasion, he appeared to him. And, if this be compared with 1 Cor. ix. 1. he considers this sight of Jesus as a necessary qualification for the apostleship; therefore, when he speaks of himself as *born out of due time*, he means, called to, and qualified for the apostleship, out of due time; that is, not at the same time in which the other apostles were, but by this extraordinary dispensation of providence.

Again, when the apostle, in 1 Thes. ii. 2. speaks of his having been *shamefully entreated at Philippi*. This will be better understood if we compare it with Acts xvi. 16, 21, 22. & seq. And when he tells the Thessalonians, in the following words, *that we were bold in our God, to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention*; this should be compared with Acts xvii. 1, & seq. Many instances of the like nature might be given, by which, the usefulness of comparing one scripture with another, would farther appear. But, I design this only as a specimen, to assist us in the application of this

\* See Lightfoot's *Harmony of the Four Evangelists*. And his *harmony of the New Testament*, Vol. I. p. 268.

direction; which a diligent enquirer into the sense of scripture, will be able, in reading it, to make farther improvements upon.

(5.) In order to our understanding the scriptures, we must take notice of the several figurative modes of speaking that are used therein. As,

1st, The part is often put for the whole \*. Thus the soul, which is one constituent part of man, is sometimes put for the whole man; as in Gen. xlv. 26. we read of the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt; and, in Rom. xii. 1. the body is put for the whole man; *I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, that is, yourselves, a living sacrifice to God.* So the blood of Christ, which is often spoken of, in scripture, as that by which we are redeemed, justified, and saved, is to be taken for the whole of his obedience and sufferings, both in life and death, to which our salvation is to be ascribed, as well as to the effusion of his blood.

2dly, The thing containing, is put for that which is contained therein †; so the cup in the Lord's supper, is put for the wine, 1 Cor. xi. 25. And the thing signified is put for the sign thereof. Thus when it is said, *This is my body*, ver. 24. the meaning is, this bread is a sign of my body, to wit, of the sufferings endured therein.

3dly, Places are, by way of anticipation, called by those names, which in reality, were not given them, or, which they were not commonly known by, till some time after. Thus it is said, that, as soon as Israel had passed over Jordan, they *encamped in Gilgal*, Josh. iv. 19. that is, in the place which was afterwards so called; for it is said, that it was called Gilgal because there they were circumcised; and so the *reproach of Egypt*, occasioned by the neglect of that ordinance, *was rolled away*, chap. v. 9. Again, it is said, *The kings that came up against Sodom*, when Lot was taken prisoner, *had smitten all the country of the Amalekites*, Gen. xiv. 7. whereas, the country that was afterwards known by that name, could not be so called at that time; since Amalek, from whom it took its name, was not born till some ages after, he being of the posterity of Esau, chap. xxxvi. 11.

4thly, The time past, or present, is often, especially in the prophetic writings, put for the time to come; which denotes the certain performance of the prediction, as much as though it were actually accomplished. Thus it is said, *He, that is, our Saviour, is despised and rejected of men; he hath born our griefs, he was wounded for our transgressions*, Isa. liii. 4, 5. And elsewhere, *The people that walked in darkness have seen*.

\* This is called *Synecdoche*.

† This is called a *Metonymy*.



*a great light*, chap. ix. 2. and *unto us a child is born*, chap. v. 9. &c.

*5thly*, One of the senses is sometimes put for another. Thus it is said, *I turned to see the voice that spake to me*, Rev. i. 12. where seeing is put for hearing, or, understanding the meaning of the voice that spake.

*6thly*, Positive assertions are sometimes taken in a comparative sense. Thus God says to Samuel, the people in asking a king, *have not rejected thee, but me*, 1 Sam. viii. 7. that is, they have cast more contempt on me than they have on thee, *q. d.* they have offered a greater affront to my government, who condescended to be their king; though they have been uneasy under thine administration, as appointed to be their judge. And, in Psal. li. 4. David says, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*. Whereas he had sinned against Uriah and Bathsheba, as having murdered the one, and tempted the other to commit adultery with him; he had sinned against the army, whom he occasioned to fall in battle, pursuant to the orders he gave Joab, with a design to destroy Uriah; yet says he, *against thee, thee only, have I sinned*; that is, the greatest aggravation of my sin is, that it contains rebellion against thee. And elsewhere, God says, *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice*, Hos. vi. 6. that is, more than sacrifice.

*7thly*, There are several hyperbolical ways of speaking in scripture, whereby more is expressed than what is generally understood. Thus the vessel in the temple, in which things were washed, which was ten cubits from one brim to the other, is called *a molten sea*, 1 Kings vii. 23. because it contained a great quantity of water; though, indeed, it was very small, if compared with the dimensions of the sea: And in 1 Kings x. 27, it is said, that Solomon *made silver to be in Jerusalem, as stones; and cedurs as the sycamore-trees, which are in the vale for abundance*. Silver was not, strictly speaking, as plentiful as stones; but it implies, that there were vast treasures thereof, heaped up by the king, and many of his subjects, and no lack of it in any one. And, in Judges xx. 16. it is said, there were *some of the Benjamites left-handed, every one of whom could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss*; which only signifies that they had an uncommon expertness in this matter; and when we read of some of the cities in the land of Canaan, that were *great, and walled up to heaven*, Deut. i. 28. it only denotes that their walls were very high: And, in Kings i. 43. it is said upon the occasion of Solomon's being anointed king, that *the people rejoiced with great joy; so that the earth rent with the sound of them*; the meaning of which is only this, that the shouts of the people were so great, that if



the concussion of the air, that was made thereby, could have rent the earth, this would have done it.

8thly, We sometimes find ironical expressions, and sarcasms used in scripture, with a design to expose the wickedness and folly of men. Thus, when our first parents sinned by adhering to the suggestions of Satan, who told them, that they *should be as gods, knowing good and evil*, Gen. iii. 5. God says in an ironical way, *Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil, &c.* ver. 22. And the prophet Elijah exposes Baal's worshippers; and Micaiah, Ahab's false prophets, by using a sarcastic way of speaking, 1 Kings xviii. 27. and chap. xxii. 15. And Job uses the same figurative way of speaking, when he reproves the bitter invectives, and false reasonings of his friends; *No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you*, Job xii. 2. And Solomon uses the same way of address, when he says, *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment*, Eccl. xi. 9. And, the man that trusts in his own righteousness for justification, is also exposed in the same way, *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled: This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow*, Isa. l. 11. And when our Saviour says to his disciples, having found them asleep, in Matt. xxvi. 45, 46. *Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners*, it is plain from the following words, that he uses this figurative way of speaking; for he immediately adds, without an irony, *Rise, let us be going*.

This, some think to be the method of speaking which our Saviour makes use of, when he reproves his disciples for that fond conceit that they had, that his kingdom was of this world; and contending sometimes among themselves, who should be greatest therein: Upon which occasion he bids them make provision for war; and take care to secure those two things that are necessary thereunto, money and arms: Thus he says, in Luke xxii. 36. *He that hath a purse, let him take it; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one*; they did not, indeed, immediately perceive that he spake in an ironical way; and therefore replied, in ver. 38. *Lord, behold here are two swords*: Upon which he says, still carrying on the irony, *It is enough*. So that, whether they understood his meaning or no, it seems to be this; if you are disposed to contend who shall be greatest, as though my kingdom were of a temporal nature, and to be erected and maintained by force.

of arms, do you think you have sufficient treasure to hire forces to join with you, or buy arms for that purpose? or, do you imagine that you have courage enough to attack the Roman empire, and gain it by force? You say, you have two swords, can you suppose that these are enough? what a ludicrous and indifferent figure would you make, if you expected to come off conquerors by this means? No, they that take the sword shall perish with the sword; for my kingdom is not of this world: So that all the advantages and honours that you are to expect therein, are of a spiritual nature. This seems rather to be the meaning of this scripture, than that which the Papists generally acquiesce in, namely, that by the *two swords*, are meant the civil and ecclesiastical; both which, as they pretend, are put into the Pope's hands.

9thly, The scripture often makes use of a figurative way of speaking, generally called an *hendyadis*, whereby one complex idea, is expressed by two words, which is very common in the Hebrew language. Thus in Jer. xxix. 11. when God promises his people, that he would *give them an expected end*, intending hereby their deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; the words, if literally translated, ought to be rendered, as it is observed in the margin, *an end and expectation*; whereas, our translators were apprized that there is such a figurative way of speaking contained in them, and therefore they render them, *an expected end*: And this figure is sometimes used in the New Testament; as when our Saviour tells his disciples, in Luke xxi. 15. *I will give you a mouth and wisdom*; that is, I will give you ability to express yourselves with so much wisdom, *that all your adversaries shall not be able to gain-say it*. And some think, that there is the same way of speaking used in John iii. 5. 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' that is, except a man be born of the Holy Spirit, or regenerated, which is signified by being born of water, he cannot, &c.

10thly, Nothing is more common than for the Holy Ghost, in scripture to make use of metaphors, which are a very elegant way of representing things, by comparing them with, and illustrating them by others, and borrowing such modes of speaking from them, as may add a very considerable beauty to them. Thus repentance and godly sorrow, together with the blessed privileges which shall hereafter attend them, are compared to sowing and reaping, in Psal. cxxvi. 5, 6. 'They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' And the prophet sets forth the labour and pains which Israel had taken in sin; and exhorts them, by a metaphor taken from hus-

bandry, to be as industrious in pursuing what would turn to a better account, in Hos. x. 12, 13. where he speaks of their having *plowed wickedness, and reaped iniquity*; and advises them to *sow to themselves in righteousness, and reap in mercy*; which, as he farther adds, they should do by *seeking the Lord*; and it is time, says he, *to seek him, till he come and rain righteousness upon you*; which is necessary to a plenteous harvest of blessings, which you may hope for in so doing. And, in chap. vii. 4. he reproves their adulteries by a metaphor, taken from *an oven heated by the baker*; and their hypocrisy by another, taken from *a cake not turned*, ver. 8. and their being weakened, and almost ruined hereby, he compares to the *gray hairs* of those who are bowed down under the infirmities of age, ver. 9. and for their cowardice and seeking help from other nations, and not from God, he calls them *a silly dove without an heart*, ver. 11.

And we may observe, that there is oftentimes a chain of metaphors in the same paragraph. Of this kind is that elegant description of old age, sickness, and death, which Solomon gives, in exhorting persons to *remember their Creator in the days of their youth*, Eccl. xii. 1—6. *while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened*; by which, it is probable, he intends the impairing the intellect, the loss of those sprightly parts which once they had, or, of the memory and judgment; upon which account men are sometimes said to out-live themselves. And he speaks of *the keepers of the house trembling*; that is, the hands and arms, designed for the defence of the body, being seized with paralytic disorders; *the strong men bowing themselves*; that is, those parts which are designed to support the body being weakened, and needing a staff to bear up themselves; *the grinders ceasing because they are few*, signifies the loss of teeth; and *they that look out of the windows being darkened*, a decay of sight; their *rising up at the voice of the bird*, implies their loss of one of the main props of nature, to wit, sleep; so that they may rise early in the morning, when the birds begin to sing, because their beds will not afford them rest: *And the daughters of music being brought low*, denotes a decay of the voice and hearing, and being not affected with those sounds which were once most delightful to them. *The almond-tree flourishing*, plainly signifies the hoary head; *the grasshopper being a burden*, is either a proverbial speech, importing a want of courage, strength, and resolution to bear the smallest pressures; or, as others understand it, their stooping, when bowed down with old age. *The silver cord loosed*, or, *the golden bowl broken at the fountain*, or *the wheel broken at the cistern*, signifies a decay of the animal spirits, a laxation of the nerves, the irregular

'circulation of the blood, or the universal stoppage thereof; and then the frame of nature is broken, and man *returns to the dust* \*.

In the New Testament there are several metaphors used; some of which are taken from the Isthmian and Olympic games, practised by the Greeks and Romans. Thus the apostle Paul compares the Christian life to *a race* in which *many run*; but they do not all *receive the prize*, 1 Cor. ix. 24. And, in ver. 25. he alludes to another exercise, to wit, wrestling; and recommends temperance as what was practised by them, as a means for their obtaining the crown. And, ver. 26. he uses a metaphor, taken from another of the games, to wit, fighting, in hope of victory; by which he illustrates his zeal in the discharge of his ministry. And in Heb. xii. 1. he speaks of the Christian *race*, and the necessity of *laying aside every weight*, to wit, allowed sins, which would retard our course, or hinder us in the way to heaven. And in Phil. iii. 13, 14. he speaks of himself both as a minister and a Christian, as 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,' and, 'pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;' where he plainly alludes to the purpose, industry, and earnestness of those who run in a race. And, in Eph. vi. 11,—16. he speaks of the difficulties, temptations, and opposition that believers are exposed to, in the Christian life; and advises them, to *put on the whole armour of God*; and so carries on the metaphor or allegory, by alluding to the various pieces of armour, which soldiers make use of when engaged in battle, to illustrate the methods we ought to take, that we may come off conquerors at last.

(6.) It will be very useful, in order to our understanding scripture, for us to know some things, relating to the different forms of civil government, and the various changes made therein, among the Jews, and other nations, with whom they were conversant. At first we find, that distinct families had the administration of civil affairs committed unto them, and the heads thereof were, as it were, the chief magistrates, who had the exercise of civil power, in some instances; especially if it did not interfere with that of the country wherein they lived. Some think, indeed, that it extended to the punishing capital crimes with death; and that Judah, who was the head of a branch of Jacob's family, when he passes this sentence concerning Tamar, in Gen. xxxviii. 24, *Bring her forth, and let her be burnt*, does it as a civil magistrate: But, if it be not deemed a rash and unjustifiable

\* See more of this in an ingenious discourse on this subject by Smith in Solomon's portraiture of old age.

expression in him, when he says, *Let her be brought forth, and burnt*, we must suppose the meaning to be, let her first be confined till she is delivered of her child, and then tried by the civil magistrate, the consequence whereof will be, her being burnt, when found guilty of the adultery that was charged upon her. So that it does not appear that the heads of families, when sojourning in other countries, had a power distinct from that of the government under which they lived, to punish offenders with death; though, I think, it is beyond dispute, that they had a government in their own families, that extended, in many respects, to civil affairs, as well as obliged them to observe those religious duties which God required of them.

It may be farther observed, that this government extended so far, as that the Patriarchs, or heads of families, had, sometimes, a power of making war, or entering into confederacies with neighbouring princes, for their own safety, or recovering their rights when invaded. Thus when Lot and the Sodomites, were taken prisoners by the four kings that came up against them, we read, in Gen. xiv. 13, 14. that Abraham called in the assistance of some of his neighbours, with whom he was in confederacy, and *armed his trained servants, three hundred and eighteen, born in his house*, and rescued him, and the men of Sodom from the hands of those that had taken them prisoners.

We have little more light as to this matter, so long as the government continued domestic, and the church in the condition of sojourners: But, when they were increased to a great nation, their civil, as well as religious government, was settled, by divine direction, under the hand of Moses, in the wilderness. The first form thereof, was a theocracy, in which God gave them laws in an immediate way; condescended to satisfy them, as to some things, which they enquired of him about; gave them particular intimations how they should manage their affairs of war and peace; and appeared for them in giving them victory over their enemies, in a very extraordinary, and sometimes, miraculous way. But, besides this great honour that God put on them, he established a form of government among them, in which they were divided into *thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens*, Exod. xviii. 31. Deut. i. 15. each of which divisions had their respective captain or governor; who are, sometimes, styled *the nobles of the children of Israel*, Exod. xxiv. 11. And these governors were generally heads of considerable families among them; which were also divided in the same way, into thousands, fifties, and tens, in proportion to the largeness thereof; thus Gideon, speaking of his family, in Judges vi. 25. calls

it, as the Hebrew word signifies, his *thousand*. And, in the same manner, their armies were divided, when engaged in war; thus when Jesse sent David with a present, into the army, to his brethren, he bade him deliver it to the *captain over their thousand*, 1 Sam. xvii. 18. and chap. xviii. 13. And we read, that Saul made David his *captain over a thousand*; which is the same with what we, in our modern way of speaking, call a commanding officer over a regiment of soldiers. Again, when David's soldiers went out to war against Absalom, it is said, *They came out by hundreds and by thousands*, 2 Sam. xviii. 4. each distinct company, or regiment, having their commanding officer.

Thus the government was settled as to civil and military affairs, in such a way, that the head of the respective division, had a power of judging in lesser matters. But since there were some affairs of the greatest importance to be transacted in the form of their government, by divine direction, God appointed seventy men of the children of Israel, to assist Moses in those matters, in which they had more immediately to do with him; and accordingly he *gave them the Spirit*, Numb. xi. 16, 17. that is, the extraordinary inspiration of the Spirit; whereby he communicated his mind and will to them. This was the first rise of the Sanhedrim; and these had a power of judging in civil matters, throughout all the ages of the church till the Jews were made tributary to the Romans; and after that, this body of men were as vile and contemptible as they had before been honourable in the eyes of just and good men, as appears by their tumultuous and unprecedented behaviour in the trial of our Saviour, and the malicious prosecutions, set on foot by them, against the apostles, without any pretence or form of law.

After the death of Joshua, and the elders that survived him, there was an alteration in the form of government, occasioned by the oppression which they were liable to from their enemies, who insulted, vexed, and sometimes plundered them of their substance. Then God raised up judges, who first procured peace for them, by success in war; and afterwards governed them; though without the character or ensigns of royal dignity. And, this government not being successive, they were, on the death of their respective judges, brought into great confusion, every one doing that which was right in his own eyes, till another judge was raised up, as some future emergency required it. Thus the posture of their affairs continued, as the apostle observes, *about the space of four hundred and fifty years*, Acts xiii. 20. and then it was altered, when, through their unsettled temper, they desired a king, in conformity to the custom of the nations round about them;



which thing was displeasing to God : nevertheless, he granted them their request, 1 Sam. viii. 5,—7. and so the government became regal. And then followed a succession of kings, set over the whole nation, till the division between Judah and Israel ; when they became two distinct kingdoms, and so continued, till their respective captivity. These things being duly considered, will give great light to several things contained in scripture ; especially as to what relates to the civil affairs of the church of God.

And, for our farther understanding thereof, it will be necessary that we take a view of the government of other nations, with whom they were often conversant. We read almost of as many kings in scripture, as there were cities in several of those countries which lay round about them ; thus, in Gen. xxxvi. we read of many dukes and kings, (whose power was much the same) who descended from Esau. These had very small dominions, each of them being, as it is probable, the chief governor of one city, or, at most, of a little tract of land round about it ; and, indeed, besides the Assyrian, and other monarchies, that were of a very large extent, and had none who stood in competition with them, under that character, while they subsisted ; all other kingdoms were very small ; therefore four kings were obliged to enter into a confederacy, to make war with Sodom, and the four neighbouring cities, which a very inconsiderable army might, without much difficulty, have subdued, Gen. xiv. 1, &c. One of them, indeed, is called king of nations ; not as though he had large dominions, but because he was the chief governor of a mixed people, from divers nations, who were settled together in one distinct colony ; and the king of Shinar, there spoken of, is not the king of Babylon, who was too potent a prince to have stood in need of others to join with him in this expedition ; but it was a petty king, who reigned in some city near Babylon, and was tributary to the Assyrian empire. These four kings, with all their forces, were so few in number, that Abraham was not afraid to attack them ; which he did with success.

Again, we read, that in Joshua's time, the kings in the land of Canaan, whom he subdued, had, each of them, very small dominions, consisting of but one capital city, with a few villages round about it. Thus we read of thirty one kings that reigned in that country, which was not so big as a fourth part of the kingdom of England, Josh. xii. And afterwards most of these kingdoms were swallowed up by the Assyrian empire. Thus the king of Assyria, as Rabshakeh boasts, had entirely conquered the kings of Hamath, Arphad, Gozan, and Haran, with several others, 2 Kings xix. 12, 13. these had

very small dominions, and therefore were easily subdued by forces so much superior to any that they could raise. Egypt, indeed, was more formidable; and therefore we often read in scripture of Israel's having recourse to them for help, and are blamed for trusting in them more than God: And, in Arabia, there were some kings who had large dominions, as appears by the vast armies that they raised: Thus *Zerah the Ethiopian came forth against Asa, with a thousand thousand men*, 2 Chron. xvi. 19. Nevertheless, the church of God was able to stand its ground; for, whether the neighbouring kings were many of them, confederate against them, or the armies they raised, exceeding numerous, like the sand on the sea shore; they had safety and protection, as well as success in war, from the care and blessing of providence; of which we have an account in the history of scripture relating thereunto.

(7.) It will be of some advantage, in order to our understanding the sense of scripture, for us to enquire into the meaning of those civil and religious offices and characters, by which several persons are described, both in the Old and New Testament. Concerning the Priests and Levites, we have had occasion frequently to insist on their call and office: Among the former of these, one is styled *high-priest*; who was not only the chief minister in holy things under the Jewish dispensation; but presided over the other priests in all those things that respected the temple-service. There was also another priest, who had pre-eminence over his brethren; that was next to the high-priest in office, who seems to be referred to, in 2 Kings xxv. 18. where we read of *Seriah, the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest*. This office is not often mentioned in scripture, but is frequently spoken of by Jewish writers: They call him, who was employed therein, as the author of the Chaldee paraphrase does on that text, the *Sagan*: And, some think, that this office was first instituted in Numb. iii. 32. in which Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest was to be *chief over the chief of the Levites, and to have the oversight of them, that kept the charge of the sanctuary*: And elsewhere, we read of Zadok and Abiathar, being, by way of eminency, *priests at the same time*, 2 Sam. xv. 35. by which, it is probable, we are to understand, as many expositors do, that one was the *high priest*, the other the *Sagan*; who was to perform the office that belonged to the high priest in all the branches thereof, if he should happen to be incapacitated for it.

Besides these, there were others who were styled *chief-priests*, as being the heads of their respective classes, and presided over them when they came to Jerusalem, to minister in their courses. There was also the president of the Sanhedrim, who is generally reckoned one of the chief priests. Moreover,

when any one was by the arbitrary will of the governors, in the degenerate and declining state of the Jewish church, deposed from the high-priesthood, barely to make way for another favourite to enjoy that honour, he was, though divested of his office, nevertheless called chief priest. This will give light to several scriptures in the New Testament, in which we often read of many chief priests at the same time, See Luke iii. 2. Mark xiv. 53.

Again, as to the Levites, these were not only appointed to be the high priest's ministers in offering gifts and sacrifices in the temple; but many of them were engaged in other offices; some in instructing the people, in the respective cities where they dwelt, who were to resort to them for that purpose, or in synagogues, erected for this branch of public worship. Others were employed as judges in determining civil or ecclesiastical matters.

Again, we often read, in scripture, of Scribes: These were of two sorts; some were employed only in civil matters; and we sometimes read of one person, in particular, who was appointed to be the king's scribe. Thus in David's reign, we read of Shemaiah the scribe, and in Hezekiah's of Shebna, 1 Chron. xxiv. 6. 2 Kings xviii. 18. This seems to have been a civil officer, not much unlike a secretary of state among us; and we seldom find mention made of more than one scribe at a time, except in Solomon's reign in which there were two, 1 Kings iv. 4.

But besides this, we often read of scribes who were engaged in other works; thus it is generally supposed, that many of them were employed in transcribing the whole, or some parts of scripture, for the use of those who employed them therein, and gratified them for it; which was necessary for the propagating religion in those ages, in which printing was not known.

There were others who explained the law to the people. Thus Ezra is styled, *a ready scribe in the law of Moses*, Ezra, vii. 6. This was an honourable and useful employment, faithfully managed by him and many others, in the best ages of the church. But, in our Saviour's time, there were scribes who pretended to expound the law, and instruct the people; but the doctrines they propagated, were very contrary to the mind of the Holy Ghost in Moses's writings; and their way of preaching was very empty and unprofitable: Upon which occasion it is said, that our Lord *taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes*, Matt. vii. 29.

Moreover, we sometimes read in the New Testament, of Lawyers, against whom our Saviour denounces woes, for opposing him and his gospel. This is supposed by some, to be

only a different name given to the scribes ; inasmuch as they practised the law in public courts of judicature, and pleaded causes in the Sanhedrin, or taught in their schools or religious assemblies ; both which the scribes did. And the evangelist Matthew, speaking concerning a lawyer, who asked our Saviour a question, *Which is the great commandment*, chap. xxii. 35, 36. Mark mentioning the same thing, calls him *one of the scribes*, Mark xii. 28. So that the same thing, for substance, seems to be intended by both of them ; or if there was any difference between them, as others suppose there was, from what is said in Luke xi. 44, 45. that when our Saviour had been reproofing the scribes and Pharisees, *One of the lawyers said unto him, thus saying thou reproachest us also*, where they speak as though they were distinct from them : yet it is evident from hence, that however they might be distinguished from them, in other respects, they agreed with them as engaged in expounding the law, and herein are said to *lade men with heavy burdens and grievous to be born* ; which they themselves would *not touch with one of their fingers*.

As for those civil officers which we read of in the Old Testament before the captivity, especially in David and Solomon's reign, they were either such as were set over the tribute, the principal of which was at the head of the treasury, 1 Kings iv. 6. and others were employed under them, to see that the taxes were duly levied and paid : These are called receivers, Isa. xxxiii. 18. Others were employed in keeping and adjusting the public records, of which, one was the chief ; who, by way of eminence, is called the recorder : And others were appointed to manage the king's domestic affairs, of which, the chief was *set over the household*, 2 Kings xviii. 18. Another is said to be *set over the host*, 1 Kings iv. 4. who either had the chief command of the army, or else was appointed to muster and determine who should go to war, or be excused from it. And there is another officer we read of once in scripture, viz. he that *counted the towers*, Isa. xxxiii. 18. whose business seems to have been to survey and keep the fortifications in repair ; but these not being so frequently mentioned in scripture as others, we pass them over, and proceed more especially to consider some characters of persons we meet with in the New Testament.

There was one sort of officers who were concerned in exacting the public revenues, after the Jews were made tributary to the Roman empire : These are called publicans ; the chief of which were generally persons of great honour and substance, who sometimes farmed a branch of the revenue, and they were, for the most part, Romans of noble extract, of

whom we have an account in Cicero \*, and other heathen writers ; but there is no mention of them in scripture. This honourable post was never conferred on the Jews ; nevertheless, we read of Zaccheus, who is said to have been one of the chief among the publicans, though a Jew, Luke xix. 2. the meaning of which is, that he was the chief officer in a particular port, who had other publicans under him ; whose business was, constantly to attend at the ports, and take an account of the taxes that were to be paid there, by those of whom they were exacted. Of this latter sort was Matthew, who is called the publican, i. e. one of the lowest officers concerned in the revenue, Matt. x. 3. compared with chap. ix. 9. These were usually very profligate in their morals, and inclined to oppress those of whom they received taxes, probably to gain advantage to themselves ; and were universally hated by the Jews.

There was another sort of men often mentioned in the New Testament, that made the greatest pretensions to religion, but were most remote from it, and justly branded with the character of hypocrites, to wit, the Pharisees, who made themselves popular by their external shew of piety. There is not, indeed, the least hint of there being such a sect amongst the Jews before the captivity ; though, it is true, the prophet Isaiah, Isa. lxv. 5. speaks of a sort of people that much resembled them, which said, *Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou* ; from whence, it seems, that there were some of like principles in his day ; unless we suppose that this scripture had its accomplishment when the sect of the Pharisees appeared in the world in a following age ; which was not long after the reign of Alexander the great †, between two and three hundred years before our Saviour's time. They are generally described in scripture, as pretending to be more expert than all others in the knowledge of the law ; but, in reality, making it void, by establishing those oral traditions, which were contrary to the true intent and meaning thereof, and, as setting up their own righteousness, and depending on the performance of some lesser duties of the law, as that from whence they expected a right to eternal life. These were the

\* Vid. Cic. in Orat. pro Plane. *Storem equitum Romanorum ornamentum civitatis, firmamentum reipublice publicanorum ordine contineri.* And in his oration, ad Quintum Fratrem, he has many things concerning the dignity of the publicans, and their advantage to the commonwealth : accordingly he says, *Si publicanis adverteretur ordinem de nobis optime meritum, & per nos cum republica conjunctum, & a nobis, & a republica disjungimus.* And, in his familiar epistles, Lib. xix. Epist. x. he calls them, *Ordinem sibi semper commendatissimum* ; & ad Atticum, Lib. vii. Epist. vii. he says, *Cæsari amicissimos fuisse publicanos.*

† See Joseph. Antiquit. Lib. xiii. Cap. ix. And we have an account of their pride and insolence in the same author, chap. xviii. and of the great disturbances that they made in civil governments, if chief magistrates did not please them.

greatest enemies, in their conduct, as well as their doctrines, to Christ, and his gospel.

There was another sect that joined with the Pharisees, in persecuting and opposing our Saviour; though otherwise they did not, in the least, accord with one another; and these were the Sadducees, who appeared in the world about the same time with the Pharisees: These were men generally reputed as profligate in their morals, and for that reason, as much hated by the common people, as the Pharisees were caressed by them. They adhered to the Philosophy of Epicurus; and took occasion, from thence to deny the resurrection, angels, and spirits, as they are said to do in scripture, Acts xxiii. 8. It is true they did not desire to be thought irreligious, though they were really so; yet our Saviour describes them, as well as the Pharisees, as *hypocrites*, and inveterate enemies of the gospel.

There was another sort of people sometimes mentioned in the New Testament, viz. the Samaritans, who separated from the Jews, out of a private pique, and built a distinct temple on mount Gerizzim<sup>\*</sup>; and for this they were excommunicated by the Jews, and universally hated, so that there was no intercourse between them, John iv. 9, especially in those things in which one might be said to be obliged to the other: These did very much corrupt the worship of God, so that Christ charges them with *worshipping they knew not what*, ver. 12. and it is observed concerning them, after the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria, and they who were left in the land *feared not the Lord*, that he *sent lions amongst them*, 2 kings xvii. 25. upon which occasion a priest was dismissed by the king of Assyria, under pretence of *instructing them in the manner of the God of the land*; and he erected a strange medly of religion, consisting partly of those corruptions therein, which had been practised by the Israelites for some ages past, and partly of the Heathen idolatry, which they brought from Assyria; upon which account it is said, *They feared the Lord, and served their own gods after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence*, 2 Kings xvii. 33.

There is another sort of men, mentioned in the New Testament, who are called Herodians: These seem to have been a political rather than a religious sect. Some of the Fathers, indeed, think that they were so called because they complimented Herod with the character of the Messiah †, who, as they supposed, would be a very flourishing prince, who was to

<sup>\*</sup> See Joseph. Antiquit. Lib. xi. Cap. viii.

† See Tertull. in præscrip. adv. Her. Cap. xlv. and Epiphanius, in Her. Cap. xx.



reign over them, according to the ancient prediction of the patriarch Jacob, after *the sceptre was departed from Judah*: But this seems to be a very improbable conjecture; for *Herod the Great* was dead, before we read any thing of the Herodians in scripture: And the Jews had an opinion, about this time, that the Messiah should never die, John xii. 34. Therefore, the most probable opinion is, that these Herodians were, in their first rise, the favourites and courtiers of Herod, and disposed to give into any alterations that he was inclined to make in the religious or civil affairs of the Jews \*. By what is said concerning them in scripture, it is supposed, that they were, for thy most part, Sadducees; for if we compare Matt. xvi. 6. with Mark viii. 15. our Saviour warns his disciples upon the same occasion, to wit, their having *forgot to take bread, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*; as the former evangelist expresses it, and *of the leaven of Herod*, viz. the Herodians, as it is in the latter: Now, though these Herodians, or court-parasites, might take their first rise in the reign of Herod the Great; yet there was a party of men succeeded them, who held the same principles, and were disposed to compliment their governors with their civil and religious rights; but they more especially distinguished themselves, by their propagating principles of loyalty among the people: And, whereas the Jews, under a pretence that they were a free nation, were very unwilling to give tribute to Cesar,) (though they would not venture their lives as Judas of Galilee, and some others had done, by refusing it;) these Herodians laid it down as an article of their faith, that they ought to pay tribute to Cesar; and therefore, when they came with this question to our Saviour, *Is it lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not?* Matt. xxii. 17. he soon discovered their hypocrisy, and knew the design of that question as he might easily do from their being Herodians. Thus concerning the various characters of persons mentioned in scripture, as subservient to our understanding thereof.

(8.) After all these helps for the understanding the sense of scripture, there is one more which is universally to be observed; namely, that no sense is to be given of any text, but what is agreeable to the analogy of faith, has a tendency to advance the divine perfections, stain the pride of all flesh, in the sight of God, and, promote practical godliness in all its branches.

1st, Scripture must be explained agreeably to the analogy

\* That Herod was disposed to make alterations in the Jews religion, by adding to it a mixture of several rites and ceremonies, taken from the Heathen, is affirmed by some. See Cuneus de Rep. Heb. Lib. i. Cap. xvi. who quotes Josephus as saying, that he altered the ancient laws of their country.

of faith. It is supposed that there is something we depend on, which we can prove to be the faith of scripture, or demonstrably founded upon it: This we are bound to adhere to; otherwise we must be charged with scepticism, and concluded not to know where to set our feet in matters of religion. Now, so far as our faith herein is founded on scripture, every sense we give of it must be agreeable thereunto; otherwise we do as it were suppose that the word of God in one place destroys what, in another, it establishes, which would be a great reflection on that which is the standard and rule of our faith. I do not hereby intend, that our sentiments are to be a rule of faith to others, any farther than as they are evidently contained in, or deduced from scripture: Yet that which we believe, as thinking it to be the sense of scripture, is so far a rule to us, that, whatever sense we give of any other scripture, must be agreeable to it; or else, we must be content to acknowledge, that we are mistaken in some of those things which we called articles of faith, as founded thereon.

2dly, No sense given of scripture, must be contrary to the divine perfections: Thus, when human passions are ascribed to God, such as grief, fear, desire, wrath, fury, indignation, &c: these are not to be explained, as when the same passions are ascribed to men, in which sense they argue weakness and imperfection. And when any phrase of scripture seems to represent him defective in power; as in Jer. xiv. 9. 'Why shouldst thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save?' we are to understand it as a charge that would be unjustly brought against God, if he did not appear in the behalf of his people, by those who are disposed to reproach and find fault with the dispensations of his providence: But, since we have taken occasion, in explaining many scriptures and doctrines founded upon them, to apply this rule; I shall content myself, at present, with the bare mentioning of it.

3dly, We are to explain scripture in such a way, as that it may have a tendency to promote practical godliness in all its branches; which is the main end and design thereof. Many instances might be given, in which this rule is to be applied; as when we are said, in Rom. vii. 14. *not to be under the law, but under grace*; we are not to understand this as though we were discharged from an obligation to yield obedience to whatever God commands; but either, as denoting our being delivered from the condemning sentence of the law; or, from the ceremonial law, to which the gospel-dispensation, which is a display of the grace of God, is always opposed. And when it is said in Eccl. vii. 16. 'Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise: Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?' We are not to understand thereby, that there is any

danger of being too holy, or strict in the performance of religious duties ; but as forbidding an hypocritical appearing to be more righteous than we are, or entertaining a proud and vain-glorious conceit of our own righteousness, because we perform some duties of religion.

Again, there are other scriptures which are sometimes perverted, as though they intimated, that prayer, or other religious duties, were not incumbent on wicked men ; as when it is said, in Prov. xxi. 27. *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord* : And, chap. xxviii. 9. that his prayer is so, or that he has nothing to do with those duties ; because it is said to such, in Psal. l. 16. *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or, that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth*. But these scriptures do not imply, that they are not obliged to perform religious duties ; but, that it is contrary to the holiness of God, and a great provocation to him when they regard not the frame of spirit with which they perform them, who draw nigh to him with their lips, when their heart is far from him, or lay claim to the blessings of the covenant of grace, while continuing in open hostility against him. To apply this rule fully, would be to go through the whole scripture, and to shew how all the great doctrines of religion which are founded upon it, are conformed thereunto ; But this we have endeavoured to do in all those instances in which we have had occasion to give the sense thereof ; and therefore shall content ourselves with this brief specimen, and leave it to every one to improve upon it in his daily meditations, in enquiring into the sense of scripture, in order to his being farther established in that religion which is founded thereon.

**QUEST. CLVIII.** *By whom is the word of God to be preached ?*

**ANSW.** The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.

**QUEST. CLIX.** *How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called thereto ?*

**ANSW.** They that are called to labour in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently ; in season, and out of season ; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, and power, faithfully, making known the whole council of God ; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capaci-

ties of the hearers ; zealously, with fervent love to God, and the souls of his people ; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.

**QUEST. CLX.** *What is required of those that hear the word preached ?*

**ANSW.** It is required of those that hear the word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer, examine what they hear, by the scripture, receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the word of God ; meditate, and confer of it ; hide it in their heart, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

**H**AVING considered, what method we are to take, in our private station, or capacity, to understand the word of God ; we have great reason to be thankful, that he has ordained that it should be publicly preached, or explained, as a farther means conducive to this end. And accordingly we are led, in these answers, to shew, who they are that God has called to this work ; and how such ought to perform it ; and with what frame of spirit we ought to attend on it.

I. The persons by whom the word of God is to be preached ; and these are only such, whom he has qualified with gifts sufficient for it ; and they ought also to be duly approved of, when called hereunto, by those among whom the providence of God directs them to exercise their ministry.

1. Concerning the qualifications which are necessary, in those that are employed in preaching the gospel. Here it is to be observed in general, that they must be sufficiently gifted for it ; which is so evident, that it would be unreasonable for any one to deny it, since no one is to attempt any thing that he is not able to perform ; especially if it be a work of the highest importance, and the unskilful managing thereof may have a tendency to do prejudice to, rather than advance the interest of Christ. It would be a reflection on the wisdom of a master, to employ his servant in a work that he has no capacity for, or entrust him with an affair that is like to miscarry in his hands. In like manner, we are not to suppose that God calls any to preach the gospel, but those whom he has, in some measure, furnished for it ; though, it is true, the best may say, as the apostle does, *We are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God* : Yet he adds, that they who are employed by him in this work, are made *able ministers of the New-Testament*, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. It is, indeed, a difficult matter to determine who are sufficiently gifted for it ; the work being so great, and our natural and

acquired endowments very small, if compared with it. But that we may briefly consider this matter, it may be observed,

(1.) That some qualifications are moral, without which, they who preach the gospel, would be a reproach to it. These respect, more especially, the conversation of those who are engaged in this work, which ought to be blameless and exemplary; not only inoffensive, but such as they, whom they are called to instruct, may safely copy after. Thus the apostle makes a solemn appeal, when he says, *You are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe*, 1 Thess. ii. 10. And he advises the Corinthians to be *followers of him*, 1 Cor. iv. 16. and commends the church elsewhere, for conforming themselves to his example, so far as it was agreeable to that of our Saviour, 1 Thess. i. 6. in which respect alone the best of men are to be followed, 1 Cor. xi. 1. Now this supposes that they have that which we call the moral qualifications, necessary to the work of the ministry, without which, a person will do more hurt, by his example, than he can do good by his doctrine; inasmuch as he will lay a stumbling-block in the way of Christians, who would be ready to say, as the apostle does to some of those who were teachers among the Jews; *Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* Rom. ii. 21, or, dost thou live in the practice of those crimes, which thou condemnest in others, and exhortest them to avoid? This qualification therefore, must be supposed to be necessary; and, indeed, an experimental knowledge of divine truths, will greatly furnish them to communicate the same to others, and spirit them, with zeal, in using their utmost endeavours, that they may be made partakers of the same experiences which they themselves, have been favoured with. Nevertheless, we are not to suppose that this alone will warrant a person's engaging in the work of the ministry; for then every one who has experienced the grace of God, might attempt it, how unable soever he be to manage it to the glory of God, and the edification of the church. Therefore,

(2.) There are other qualifications more directly subservient hereunto. These the apostle speaks of, when he describes a gospel-minister as one who is *apt to teach*, 1 Tim. iii. 2. and *able rightly to divide the word of truth*, 2 Tim. ii. 15. and, by *sound doctrine*, to exhort and *convince gainsayers*, Tit. i. 9. They who take upon them to explain scripture, and apply it to the consciences of men, ought, certainly, with great diligence and hard study, to use their utmost endeavours to understand it. And to this we may add, that they ought to be able to reason, or infer just consequences from it; whereby they may appear to be well versed in those great doctrines, on which our faith and religion is founded. This, indeed, must

be confessed to be a work of difficulty ; and, they who think themselves best furnished in this respect, will have reason to conclude, as the apostle says, that they *know but in part, and prophecy in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

To this we may add, that there are various parts of learning, that may be reckoned, in some respects, ornamental, which would tend to secure him that preaches the gospel from contempt ; and others, that are more immediately subservient to our understanding scripture, namely, a being well acquainted with those languages, in which the Old and New Testament were written, and able to make critical remarks on the style and mode of expression used in each of them, and a being conversant in the writings of those, whether in our own or other languages, who have clearly and judiciously explained the doctrines of the gospel, or led us into the knowledge of those things that have a tendency to illustrate them. And, inasmuch as preaching contains in it an address to the judgments and consciences of men, I cannot but reckon it a qualification necessary in order hereunto, that all those parts of learning that have a tendency to enlarge the reasoning faculties, or help us to see the connexion or dependence of one thing upon another, should be attended to, that we may hereby be fitted to convey our ideas with judgment and method. These qualifications are to be acquired. We pass by those that are natural, to wit, a sufficient degree of parts, and such an elocution as is necessary for those who are to speak to the edification of an audience, without which all other endeavours to furnish themselves for this work, will be to very little purpose.

2. They, by whom the word of God is to be preached, are to be duly approved and called to that office. A person may think himself qualified for it without sufficient ground ; therefore this matter ought to be submitted to the judgment of others, by whose approbation he is to engage in this work. The first thing that is to be enquired into, is ; whether he is called to it by God, not only by his providence, which opens a door for his preaching the gospel, but by the success which he is pleased to grant to his endeavours, in order to his being duly qualified for it ? Notwithstanding, since persons may be mistaken, and think they have a divine call hereunto, when they have not ; it is necessary that they should be approved by those who are sufficient judges of this matter, that they may not be exposed to temptation, so as to engage in a work which they are not deemed sufficient for. Not that it is in the power of ministers, or churches, especially according to the present situation of things, to hinder an unqualified person who has too high thoughts of his own abilities, from preaching to a number of people that is disposed to hear him ; yet no one is bound



or ought, in prudence, or faithfulness to God or man, to own any to be a minister, whose gifts do not render him fit to be approved ; nor, on the other hand, can any judgment be passed on this matter, without sufficient acquaintance or conversation with him, that thereby it may be known whether he be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, and able rightly to divide the word of truth.

Here, I think, there is some difference between the approbation that ought to be passed on those who first engage in the work of preaching, and the call to the pastoral office ; the latter supposes the former ; and therefore a person ought first to be approved of, as fit to preach the gospel, in the opinion of those who are allowed to be competent judges hereof, which is necessary to his entrance on that work with reputation and acceptance ; without which, he is to stand and fall to his own master, and acquiesce in the approbation of those who are willing to sit under his ministry ; while others are not bound (as being destitute of sufficient evidence) to conclude him furnished for, or called to it.

As to the call to the pastoral office ; though no one has a right to impose pastors on churches ; yet it is the indispensable duty of every church not barely to enquire ; whether the person, whom they have a desire to call to that office, be such an one as is approved by the greater number of them ; but, whether the step they are taking herein, is such as has a tendency to secure their reputation as a church of Christ, without exposing them to the just blame and censure of others, who are in the same faith and order with themselves ? that they may do nothing that is in the least offensive, or that has a tendency to weaken the interest of Christ in his churches. It is true, no one can put a stop to their proceeding, if they are resolved to set over them one that is not only scandalous in his conversation, but inclined to preach what is subversive of the fundamental articles of our faith ; yet they cannot hereby act as a church that has obtained mercy from God to be faithful, or engage in this important work with judgment. It is therefore expedient, that churches should set over them ministers approved by others as sound in the faith, as well as reckoned, by themselves, able to preach to their edification ; and, in order hereunto, it is expedient that some ministers, and members of other churches, should be present at their investiture in that office, to which they have called them, not barely as being witnesses of their faith and order, in common with the whole assembly, but as testifying hereby their approbation of their proceedings, and giving ground to the world to conclude, that that person, whom they have called, is owned by others, as well as themselves.

And, in order thereunto, it is necessary that ministers, who are to join in begging the blessing of God on their proceedings, and giving a word of exhortation to them, should be satisfied concerning the fitness of him whom the church has called to that office; which is supposed by their being present, and bearing their respective parts therein. This, I think, is intended by that expression of the apostle, in which he advises Timothy, *to lay hands suddenly on no man; nor to be partaker of other men's sins; but to keep himself pure*, 1 Tim. v. 22. that is, without guilt, as being active in approving those that he ought not to approve of. I do not, by this, take the power out of the hands of the church, of setting a pastor over themselves; but only hereby argue the expediency of their consulting the honour of the gospel herein, and acting so, as that they may have the approbation of other churches in that solemnity.

II. We are now to consider how the word of God is to be preached by those who are qualified, approved, and called thereunto; and that, both as to doctrines to be insisted on, and the manner in which they are to be delivered.

1. What they are to preach, ought to be sound doctrine, and that not barely what is deemed to be so by him that preaches it; since there is scarce any one but thinks himself sound in the faith, how remote soever his sentiments may be from the true intent and meaning of the word of God. But hereby we understand those doctrines which are so called by the apostle, Tit. i. 9. such as are agreeable to that *form of sound words* which is transmitted to us by divine inspiration, 2 Tim. i. 13. *the doctrine which is according to godliness*, 1 Tim. vi. 3. as having a tendency to recommend and promote it. This is styled elsewhere, *The faith once delivered to the saints*; which is not only to be preached, but *earnestly contended for*, Jude, ver. 3. These are such doctrines as have a tendency to advance the glory of God, and do good to the souls of men, that are relished and savoured by sincere Christians, who know the truth, as it is in Jesus; and are *nourished up*, as the apostle says, *in the words of faith and of good doctrine*, 1 Tim. iv. 6. This, as it has a peculiar reference to the gospel, and the way of salvation contained therein, is called *preaching Christ*, Col. i. 18. or a *determining to know nothing*; that is, to appear to know, or to discover nothing, *save Jesus Christ and him crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. or deliver nothing but what tends to set forth the person and offices of Christ, either directly, or in its remote tendency thereunto. Our Saviour advises the church, to *take heed what they hear*, Mark iv. 24. as signifying, that we are to receive no doctrines but what are agreeable to the gospel. And this is a sufficient intimation that such only are to be preached, the contrary to which method of preaching, the apos-

He calls *perverting the gospel of Christ*; and adds, that *though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed*, Gal. i. 7, 8. These are the only doctrines that God will own, because they tend to set forth his perfections, as they were at first communicated by him for that end.

2. We are now to consider the manner in which these doctrines are to be preached. This is laid down in several heads,

(1.) Diligently and constantly, in season and out of season, considering this work as the main business of life, that which a minister is to *give himself wholly to*, 1 Tim. iv. 15. and all his studies are to be subservient to this end. He is to rejoice in all opportunities, in which he may lead those whom he is called to minister to, in the way to heaven, and be willing to lay out his strength, and those abilities which God has given him, to his glory. Thus the apostle says, *I would very gladly spend, and be spent for you*, 2 Cor. xii. 14. This argues, that the word is not barely to be preached occasionally, as though it were to be hid from the world, or only imparted, when the leisure or inclination of those who are called thereto, will admit of it. The character which the apostle gives of gospel-ministers, is, that they *watch for the souls of those to whom they minister*; that is, they wait for the best and fittest seasons to inculcate divine truths to them. This is particularly expressed *by preaching the word, and being instant in season, and out of season, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all long-suffering and doctrine*, 2 Tim. iv. 2. which implies, that it ought to be preached, not only on that day, which God has sanctified for public worship, of which preaching is a part; but on all occasions, when they are apprehensive that the people are desirous to receive and hear it.

(2.) It is to be preached plainly. Thus the apostle says, *We use great plainness of speech*, 2 Cor. iii. 12. This method of preaching is inconsistent with the using unintelligible expressions; which neither they nor their hearers well understand. The style ought to be familiar, and adapted to the meanest capacities; which may be done without exposing it to contempt. And it is particularly observed, that it ought not to be, *in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*; as the apostle says concerning his method of preaching, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The great design hereof, is, not to please the ear with well turned periods, or rhetorical expressions, or an affectation of shewing skill in human learning, in those instances in which it is not directly adapted to edification, or rendered subservient to the explaining of scripture. A demonstrative way of preaching, is not, indeed, opposed to this plainness that is here intended but it is

the *demonstration of the Spirit*; which, though it differs from that which the apostles were favoured with (who were led into the doctrines they preached, by immediate inspiration;) yet we are to endeavour to prove, by strength of argument, that what we deliver is agreeable to the mind and will of God therein; and yet to do this with that plainness of address, as those who desire to awaken the consciences of men, and give them the fullest conviction, proving from the scripture, that what we say is true. This account the apostle gives of his ministry, 2 Cor. iv. 2. as what was most adapted to answer the valuable ends thereof.

(3.) The word of God is to be preached faithfully; which supposes that they who are called to this work, have the souls of those whom they preach to, committed to their care; so that, if they perish for want of due instruction, they are, for this neglect, found guilty before God. Thus God says to the prophet, *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel*, Ezek. iii. 17, &c. and therefore he was to *give them warning*, which, if he did, he *delivered his own soul*; but if not, God intimates to him that *their blood should be required at his hand*. This supposes that they are accountable to God for the doctrines they deliver; for which reason the apostle speaks of them, as *stewards of the mysteries of God*, of whom it was *required that they should be found faithful*, 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. and, as a particular instance thereof, he makes a solemn appeal to the elders of the church of Ephesus, that he had *kept back nothing that was profitable unto them, nor shunned to declare all the counsel of God*, Acts xx. 27. This faithfulness in the exercise of the ministry, is opposed to their having respect of persons from some obligation which they are laid under to them, or the prospect of some advantage that they expect from them, which makes them sparing in reproofing those who are blame-worthy, for fear of giving offence, or losing their friendship. It is also opposed to preaching those doctrines which are suited to the humours and corruptions of men, and neglecting to insist on the most necessary and important truths; because they apprehend that they will be entertained with disgust. This is to act as though their main design were to please men rather than God. And it is very remote from the conduct of the prophet Isaiah; who, when he was informed that the people desired that the *prophets would prophesy smooth things* to them, and *cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before them*, Isa. xxx. 10, 11. he takes occasion to represent God as the holy one of Israel, in the following words, and to denounce the judgments which he would bring upon them, how unwilling soever they were to receive this doctrine from him.

And, to this we may add, that they are to be reckoned no other than unfaithful in their method of preaching, who, under a pretence of pressing the observance of moral duties, set aside the great doctrines of faith in Christ, and justification by his righteousness, which is the only foundation of our acceptance in his sight. Concerning which we may say, without being supposed to have light thoughts of moral virtue; that the one ought, in no wise to exclude the other. Neither can they be reckoned faithful, who shun to declare those important truths, on which the glory of God, and the comfort of his people depend; and therefore, if morality be rightly preached, it ought to be inculcated from evangelical motives, and connected with other truths that have a tendency more directly to set forth the Mediator's glory; which ought not to be laid aside as controverted doctrines, which all cannot acquiesce in, as supposing that the tempers, or rather the ignorance and corruption of men, will not bear them.

(4.) The word of God is to be preached wisely. This wisdom consists,

[1.] In the choice of those subjects, that have the greatest tendency to promote the interest of Christ, and the good of mankind in general. There are many doctrines which must be allowed to be true, that are not of equal importance with others; nor so much adapted to promote the work of salvation, and the glory of God therein. There are some doctrines which the apostle calls *the present truth*, 2 Pet. i. 12. in which he instructs those to whom he writes. Accordingly, those truths are to be frequently inculcated, which are most opposite to the dictates of corrupt nature and carnal reason; because of their holiness, spirituality, beauty, and glory. Again, those doctrines are to be explained and supported by the most solid and judicious methods of reasoning, which are very much perverted and undermined by the subtle enemies of our salvation. And whatever truth is necessary to be known, as subservient to godliness, which multitudes are ignorant of, this is to be frequently insisted on, that they may not be destroyed for lack of knowledge; and those duties, which we are most prone to neglect, in which the life and power of religion discovers itself, these are to be inculcated as a means to promote practical godliness.

[2.] The wisdom of those that preach the gospel farther appears, in suiting their discourses to the capacities of their hearers; of whom, it must be supposed,

1st, That some are ignorant and weak in the faith who cannot easily take in those truths that are, with much more ease, apprehended and received by others; for their sake the word of God is to be preached with the greatest plainness and familiarity of style. Thus the apostle speaks of some who needed

to be fed with milk, being unskilful in the word of righteousness, and, as it were, babes in knowledge, Heb. v. 12,—14. whereas others, that he compares to strong men, were fed with meat, that was agreeable to them. By which he doth not intend, as I apprehend, a difference of doctrines, as though some were to have nothing preached to them but moral duties: while others were to have the doctrines of justification, and faith in Christ, &c. preached to them; but rather a different way of managing them, respecting the closeness and connexion of those methods of reasoning by which they are established which some are better able to improve and receive advantage by, than others.

2dly, Some must be supposed to be wavering, and in danger of being perverted from the faith of the gospel; for their sakes the most strong and cogent arguments are to be made use of, and well managed, in order to their establishment therein, and those objections that are generally brought against it, answered.

3dly, Others are lukewarm and indifferent in matters of religion; these need to have awakening truths, insisted on with great seriousness and affection, suited to the occasion thereof.

4thly, Others are assaulted with temptations, and subject to many doubts and fears, about the state of their souls, and the truth of grace; or, it may be, their consciences are burdened with some scruples, about the lawfulness or expediency of things, and some hesitation of mind, whether what they engage in is a sin or duty. Now, that the word may be adapted to their condition, the wiles of Satan are to be discovered, cases of conscience resolved, evidences of the truth of grace, or the marks of sincerity and hypocrisy are to be plainly laid down, and the fulness, freeness, and riches of divine grace, through a Mediator, to be set forth as the only expedient to fence them against their doubts and fears, and keep them from giving way to despair.

5thly, The word of God is to be preached zealously, with fervent love to God, and the souls of his people. Thus it is said, in Acts xviii. 25. concerning Apollos, that *being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently in the things of the Lord*. This zeal doth not consist in a passionate, furious address, arising from personal pique and prejudice; or, in exposing men for their weakness; or expressing an undue resentment of some injuries received from them; but it is such a zeal, that is consistent with fervent love to God, and the souls of men. The love which is to be expressed to God, discovers itself, in the concern they have for the advancing his truth, name, and glory, and the promoting his interest in the world, which is infinitely preferable to all other interests; and their



love to the souls of men induceth them to preach to them, as considering that they have not only the same nature in common with themselves, in which they must either be happy or miserable, for ever : But they are liable to the same infirmities, difficulties, dangers, and spiritual enemies, which should incline those that preach the gospel, to express the greatest sympathy with them in their troubles, while they are using their utmost endeavours to help them in their way to heaven. They are to be considered as being, by nature, in a lost, undone condition ; and the success of the gospel, as being the only means to prevent their perishing for ever. And, with respect to those, in whom the word of God is made effectual for their conversion, ministers are to endeavour to build them up in their holy faith, as those who, they hope, will be their *crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming*, 1 Thess. ii. 19.

*6thly*, The word is to be preached sincerely, aiming at the glory of God, and the conversion, edification, and salvation of his people. Accordingly,

*1st*, Ministers must firmly believe the doctrines they deliver, and not preach them because they are the generally-received opinion of the churches ; for that is hardly consistent with sincerity ; at least, it argues a great deal of weakness, or want of judgment, as though they were wavering about those important truths, which they think in compliance with custom, they are obliged to communicate,

*2dly*, They must have no by and unwarrantable ends in preaching, namely, the gaining the esteem of men, or promoting their own secular interest. Though what the apostle says be true, that the *labourer is worthy of his hire*, and, *they that preach the gospel, must live of the gospel*, 1 Cor. ix. 14. Yet this ought not to be the principal end inducing them hereunto ; for that is like what is threatened against the remains of the house of Eli, who were exposed to such a servile and mercenary temper, as to *crouch for a piece of silver ; and to say, put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread*, 1 Sam. ii. 36. The glory of God is to be the principal end of the ministry ; and, accordingly, they are to endeavour to approve themselves to him in the whole of their conduct therein. Thus the apostle speaks of himself, as *not seeking to please men ; which, if I do*, says he, *I should not be the servant of Christ*, Gal. i. 10. This method of preaching will be a means to beget, in the minds of men, the highest esteem of him. And, more especially, the glory of God is to be set forth as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, or discovers itself in the work of salvation, brought about by him. This

is the only expedient to render the preaching of the gospel conducive to answer the most valuable ends.

And, inasmuch as next to the glory of God, the conversion, edification, and salvation of men, is to be aimed at; such a method of preaching is to be used, as is best adapted hereunto. Therefore,

(1st,) In order to the promoting the conversion of sinners, they are to be led into a sense of their guilt and misery, while in an unconverted state; together with the necessity of their believing on Christ, to the salvation of the soul; as also the methods prescribed in the gospel for their recovery, and escaping the wrath they are liable to. They are to be made acquainted with the gospel-call, in which sinners are invited to come to Christ, and his willingness to receive all that repent and believe in him. And, since this is the peculiar work of the Spirit, they are to pray and hope for his grace, to give success to his ordinances, in which they wait for his salvation. And if God is pleased to set home these truths on the consciences of men, and enable them to comply with this call, then the word is preached in a right manner, and their labour is not in vain in the Lord.

(2dly,) As for those who are converted, their farther establishment, and edification in Christ is designed, together with the increase of the work of grace that is begun in them. Accordingly they are to be told of the imperfection of their present state, and what is still lacking to fill up the measure of their faith and obedience; and they are to be warned of the assaults that they are like to meet with from their spiritual enemies, of the wiles and devices of Satan, to interrupt the actings of grace, overthrow their confidence, or disturb their peace. They are also to be directed how they may improve the redemption purchased by Christ, for the mortifying of sin, obtaining the victory over temptation, and increasing their faith in him. And, in addressing themselves to them, they are to explain difficult scriptures, that they may grow in knowledge, and discover to them the evidences of the strength and weakness of grace, tending to promote the one, and prevent the other. Also, the promises of the gospel are to be applied to them for their encouragement, and they excited to go on in the ways of God, depending on, and deriving strength from Christ, for the carrying on the work that is begun in them. This leads us to consider what is contained in the last of the answers we are explaining, viz.

III. What is the hearer's duty, who desires to receive spiritual advantage by the word preached; and this respects his behaviour before, in, and after his hearing the word.

1. Before we hear the word, we are to endeavour to prepare

ourselves for the solemn work which we are to engage in, duly considering how we need instruction, or, at least, to have truths brought to our remembrance, and impressed on our hearts; as also, that this is an ordinance which God has instituted for that purpose; and, as it is instamped with his authority, so we may depend on it, that his eye will be upon us, to observe our frame of spirit under the word. And we ought to have an awful sense of his perfections, to excite in us an holy reverence, and the exercise of other graces, necessary to our engaging in this duty, in a right manner; and inasmuch as these are God's gift, we are to be very importunate with him in prayer for them. And, among other things, we are to desire that he would assist his ministers in preaching the word; so that what shall be delivered by them, may be agreeable to his mind and will; and, that this may be done in such a way, that it may recommend itself to the consciences of those that hear it; that their understandings may be enlightened, and they enabled to receive it with faith and love; and that all those corruptions, or temptations, that hinder the success thereof, may be prevented. These, and such-like things are to be desired of God in prayer; not only for ourselves in particular, but for all those who shall be engaged with us in this ordinance.

We might here consider the arguments or pleas that we may make use of, with relation hereunto, viz. such as are taken from those promises which God has made of his presence with his people, when engaged in public worship, Exod. xx. 24. Matt. xviii. 20. We may also plead the insufficiency of man's instructions, without the Spirit's teaching, or leading us into all truth; and that Christ has promised that his Spirit shall be given to his people for this end, John xvi. 13, 14. We may also plead our own inability to hear the word of God in a right manner, and the violent efforts that are made by our corrupt nature, to hinder our receiving advantage by it, and what endeavours Satan often uses in conjunction with it, by which means, as our Saviour expresses it in the parable, Matt. xiii. 19. he *catches away* that seed which was sown in the heart; whereby it will become unfruitful. And to this we may add, the afflictive sense we have of the ill consequences which will attend our hearing the word, and not profiting by it, whereby the soul is left worse than it was before; as the apostle says, that he was, in the course of his ministry, to some, the *savour of death unto death*, 2 Cor. ii. 16. We may also plead the glory that will redound to God, by the displays of his grace, in making the word effectual to salvation, and the great honour he hereby puts on his own institution, inasmuch as, herein, he sets his seal thereunto. We may also plead that this is God's usual way in which he dispenses his grace, and accordingly he

has encouraged us, to hope and wait for it therein ; and, that multitudes of his saints, both in earth and heaven, have experienced his presence with them under the word ; whereby they were first enabled to believe in Christ, and afterwards established more and more in that grace, which they were made partakers of at first from him. Therefore we hope and trust that we may be admitted to participate of the same privilege.

2. There are several duties required of us in hearing the word ; particularly we are to try the doctrines that are delivered, whether they are agreeable unto, and founded on scripture, that we may not be imposed upon by the errors of men, instead of the truths of God. Moreover, we are to endeavour to exercise those graces that are suitable to the work we are engaged in ; and, as the apostle says, *mix the word with faith*, 2 Cor. ii. 16. and express the highest love and esteem for the glorious truths which are contained therein, discovering the greatest readiness to yield obedience to every thing God commands, and thankfulness for whatever he has promised to us. Moreover we are to hear the word with a particular application of it to our own condition, whether it be in a way of admonition, reproof, exhortation or encouragement, and to see how much we are concerned to improve it, to our spiritual advantage.

3. We are now to consider those duties which are to be performed by us, after we have heard the word preached. Some of these require privacy or retirement from the world ; by which means we may meditate on, digest, and apply what we have heard ; and, together with this, examine ourselves, and thereby take a view of our behaviour, whilst we have been engaged in public worship, in order to our being humbled for sins committed, or thankful for grace received. But this having been particularly considered under another answer, relating to our sanctifying the Sabbath in the evening thereof \*, I shall pass it over at present.

There is another duty incumbent on us, after we have heard the word, which may conduce to the spiritual advantage of others, as it is to be the subject of our conversation ; upon which account we are to take occasion to observe the excellency, beauty, and glory of divine truths, that are communicated in scripture : We are to hear the word, not merely as critics, making our remarks on the elegance of style, the fluency of expression, or other gifts, which we are ready to applaud in the preacher, on the one hand, nor exposing and censuring the defects which we have observed in his method of address, on the other. We are rather to take notice of the suitableness of

\* See Vol. III. p. 495.

the truths delivered to the condition of mankind in general, or our own in particular, and observe how consonant the word preached has been to the holy scriptures, the standard of truth, and the agreement thereof, with the experiences of God's people. We are also to take occasion from hence, to enquire into the meaning of scripture, especially some particular texts that have been insisted on, or, in some measure, explained, in the preaching of the word, in order to our farther information and improvement in the knowledge of divine things.

The last thing that is observed in this answer, is, that after having heard the word of God, we are to endeavour to bring forth the fruit of it in our lives : This consists in a conversation becoming the gospel ; and being induced hereby to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, Tit. ii. 13. And we ought to express a becoming zeal for divine truths, defending them when opposed, and endeavouring to establish others therein ; that so we may recommend religion to them, as that which is the most solid foundation for peace, and leads to universal holiness, that hereby we may adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things.

**QUEST. CLXI.** *How doth the sacraments become effectual means of salvation ?*

**ANSW.** The sacraments become effectual means of salvation ; not by any power in themselves, or any virtue derived from the piety and intention of him by whom they are administered ; but only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they are instituted.

**QUEST. CLXII.** *What is a sacrament ?*

**ANSW.** A sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ in his church, to signify, seal, and exhibit, unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation ; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces ; to oblige them to obedience ; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another, and to distinguish them from those that are without.

**QUEST. CLXIII.** *What are the parts of a sacrament ?*

**ANSW.** The parts of a sacrament are two ; the one an outward and sensible sign, used according to Christ's own appointment ; the other, an inward and spiritual grace, thereby signified.

**QUEST. CLXIV.** *How many sacraments hath Christ instituted in his church, under the New Testament?*

**ANSW.** Under the New Testament Christ hath instituted in his church only two sacraments; Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

**I**T has pleased God, in setting forth the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty to impart his mind and will to man, various ways, besides the discovery which he makes of himself in the dispensations of his providence. These are, more especially, reducible to two general heads, viz. his making it known by words, which is the more plain and common way by which we are led into the knowledge of divine truths; or else, by visible signs, which are sometimes called types, figures, or sacraments. The former of these we have already insisted on; the latter we now proceed to consider. And, in order hereunto, we are first to explain the nature, and shew what are the parts of a sacrament, as we have an account thereof in the two last of these answers; and then consider, how the sacraments become effectual means of salvation, as contained in the first of them.

**I.** Concerning the nature and parts of a sacrament: In order to our understanding whereof, we shall consider,

**1.** The meaning of the word. It is certain, that the word *sacrament* is not to be found in scripture, though the thing intended thereby, is expressed in other words; and, for this reason, some have scrupled the use of it, and choose rather to make use of other phrases more agreeable to the scripture mode of speaking: But, though we are not to hold any doctrine that is not founded on scripture; yet those which are contained therein, may be explained in our own words, provided they are consonant thereunto. The Greek church knew nothing of the word *sacrament*, it being of a Latin original; but, instead thereof, used the word *mystery*; thereby signifying that there is in the sacraments, besides the outward and visible signs, some secret or hidden mystery signified thereby. The Latin church used the word *sacrament*, not only as signifying something that is sacred; but as denoting, that thereby they were bound as with an oath, to be the Lord's; as the Psalmist says, *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments*, Psal. cxix. 106. and God, by the prophet, says, *Unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear*, Isa. xlv. 23.

The word Sacrament was used, indeed, by the Romans, to signify that oath which the soldiers took, to be true and faithful to their general, and to fight courageously under his ban-



ner; but the primitive Christians signified hereby, that, when they were called to suffer for Christ, which was, as it were, a fighting under his banner, they did in this ordinance, as it were, take an oath to him, expressing their obligation not to desert his cause. Now, since this is agreeable to the end and design of a sacrament, whatever be the first original of the use of the word, I think we have no reason to scruple the using of it, though it be not found in scripture: Nevertheless, Christians ought not to contend, or be angry with one another about this matter, it being of no great importance, if we adhere steadfastly to the explication given thereof in scripture. (a)

2. We shall now consider the nature of a sacrament, as described in one of the answers we are explaining. And here,

(1.) It is observed, concerning it, that it is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ. What we are to understand by an ordinance, and its being founded on a divine institution, which is our only warrant to engage therein, has been before considered; and, indeed, every duty that is to be performed by God's express command, which he has designed to be a pledge of his presence, and a means of grace, is a branch of religious worship, and may be truly styled an holy ordinance. Now, that the sacraments are founded on Christ's institution, is very evident from scripture. Thus he commanded his apostles, to *baptize all nations*, Matt. xxviii. 19. and, as to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, he commanded them to *do what is contained therein, in remembrance of him*, Matt. xxvi. 26, 27. compared with 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.

(2.) The persons, for whom the sacraments were instituted, are the church, who stand in an external covenant-relation to God, and, as the apostle says, are *called to be saints*, Rom. i. 7. It is to them, more especially, that Christ, when he ascended up on high, gave ministers, as a token of his regard to them, that hereby they may be edified, who are styled *his body*, Eph. iv. 16. And, though these ministers are authorized to preach the gospel to all nations, which is necessary for the gathering churches out of the world; yet they are never ordered to administer the sacraments to all nations, nor, indeed, to any, especially the sacrament of the Lord's supper, till they profess subjection to Christ, and thereby join together in the fellowship of the gospel. As the sacraments under the Old Testament dispensation, were to be administered to none but the church of the Jews, the only people in the world that professed the true religion; so, under the gospel dispensation, none

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(a) Sacrament is the word used by the Vulgate for mystery, and this is a much more probable meaning of the term as used by the early christians.

have a right to sacraments but those who are therein professedly devoted to him.

3. We are now to consider the matter of the sacraments, which is set forth in general terms ; and it is also called in one of the answers we are explaining, the parts of a sacrament ; these are an outward and visible sign, and an inward and spiritual grace, signified thereby ; or, as it is otherwise expressed, it signifies, seals, and exhibits to those who are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of Christ's mediation. These words are often used, but not so well explained as might be desired.

(1.) It is called a sign, in which, by a visible action, some spiritual benefits are signified : This is undoubtedly true ; and it is a reproach cast on God's holy institutions, in some who deny sacraments to be divine ordinances, when they style them all carnal ordinances, beggarly elements, or a re-establishing the ceremonial law, without distinguishing between significant signs, that were formerly ordinances to the Jewish church, but are now abolished ; and those that Christ hath given to the gospel church. In this idea of the sacraments, we must consider, that they agree, in some things, with the preaching of the word ; namely, that hereby Christ and his benefits, are set forth as objects of our faith ; and the same ends are desired and attained by both, viz. our being affected with, and making a right improvement of the blessings purchased by him, together with our enjoying communion with him ; and they are, both of them, sacred ordinances, instituted by Christ, and therefore to be attended on in an holy manner : But, on the other hand, they differ, with respect to the way or means by which Christ and his benefits are set forth ; inasmuch, as in the preaching of the word, there is a narration of what he hath done and suffered ; and, upon this account the apostle says, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, Rom. x. 17. whereas, in the sacraments, there is a representation thereof by signs ; in which case we may apply the words of the prophet, *Mine eye afflicteth mine heart*, Lam. iii. 51. as there is the external symbol of Christ's dying love, which is an inducement to us to love him again. They also differ, in that the sacraments are not only designed to instruct ; but, by our act and deed, we signify our engagement to be the Lord's.

(2.) The sacraments are also said to seal the blessings that they signify ; and accordingly they are called, not only signs, but seals. It is a difficult matter to explain, and clearly to state the difference between these two words, or to shew what is contained in a seal, that is not in a sign : Some think that it is a distinction without a difference. The principal ground

which most divines proceed upon, when they distinguish between them is, what we read in Rom. iv. 11. in which the apostle, speaking concerning Abraham, says, *he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith* \*. But the same thing might have been affirmed concerning it, or any other significant ordinance, if the words sign and seal were supposed to be of the like import; for it is not said he received the ordinance of circumcision, which is not only a sign, but a seal; but he received that which was a sign, or a seal of the blessing about which his faith was conversant. However, that we may explain this matter, without laying aside those words that are commonly used and distinguished in treating on this subject, it may be observed, that a sign is generally understood as importing any thing that hath a tendency to signify or confirm something that is transacted, or designed to be published, and made visible: Accordingly some signs have a natural tendency to signify the things intended by them; as the regular beating of the pulse is a sign of health, smoke the sign of fire. And other things not only signify, but represent that which they give us an idea of, by some similitude that there is therein, as the picture doth its original. Other things only signify as they are ordained or designed for that use, by custom or appointment; thus, in civil matters, a staff is a sign of power to exercise an office; the seal of a bond, or conveyance, is the sign of a right that is therein conveyed, or made over to another to possess: It is in this respect that the sacraments are signs of the covenant of grace: They do not naturally represent Christ and his benefits; but they signify them by divine appointment.

But, on the other hand, a seal, according to the most common acceptation of the word, imports a confirming sign †: Yet we must take heed that we do not, in compliance with custom, contain more in our ideas of this word, than is agreeable to the analogy of faith: Therefore, let it be considered, that the principal method God hath taken for the confirming our faith in the benefits of Christ's redemption, is, his own truth and faithfulness, whereby the heirs of salvation *have strong consolation*, Heb. iv. 17, 18. or else the internal testimony of the Spirit of God in our hearts. The former is an objective means of confirmation, and the latter a subjective; and this the apostle calls our *being established in Christ, and sealed, having the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*, 2 Cor. i. 21, 23.

This is not the sense in which we are to understand the word

\* Καὶ ἐν μίᾳ τῇ ἀρχῇ ἀποστολῆς, σφραγίδα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως.

† When these two are distinguished by divines, the one is generally called, signum significans; the other signum confirmans; or, the former is said, significare; the latter, obsignare.

as applied to the sacraments ; since if we call them confirming seals, we intend nothing else hereby, but that God has, to the promises that are given to us in his word, added these ordinances ; not only to bring to mind this great doctrine, that Christ has redeemed his people by his blood ; but to assure them, that they who believe in him, shall be made partakers of this blessing ; so that these ordinances are a pledge thereof to them, in which respect God has set his seal, whereby, in an objective way, he gives believers to understand, that Christ, and his benefits, are theirs ; and they are obliged, at the same time, by faith, as well as in an external and visible manner, to signify their compliance with his covenant, which we may call their setting to their seal that God is true ; as we may allude to that expression of our Saviour, *He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true*, John iii. 33. The sacraments are God's seals, as they are ordinances given by him for the confirmation of our faith, that he would be our covenant-God ; and they are our seals, or we set our seal thereunto, when we visibly profess, which ought to be done also by faith, that we give up ourselves to him, to be his people, and desire to be made partakers of the benefits which Christ hath purchased, in his own way. Thus concerning the sacraments, as being signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

There is another expression, used in this answer, that needs a little explication ; namely, when the sacraments are said, not only to signify and seal, but to exhibit the benefits of Christ's mediation. *To exhibit*, sometimes signifies to shew, or present to our view ; which word, if it be so understood in this place, imports the same as when it is said, that the sacraments are signs or seals thereof, or significant ordinances for the directing and exciting our faith, as conversant about what we are to understand thereby. Again, *to exhibit*, sometimes signifies to give, communicate, or convey ; and because it is not only distinguished from signifying and sealing in the definition which we have of a sacrament in the Shorter Catechism ; but is described as that by which Christ and his benefits are applied unto believers ; therefore, I am inclined to think, that it is in this latter sense that the word is to be taken in the answer which we are explaining ; and if so, we must distinguish between Christ's benefits being conveyed, made over, exhibited, or applied, by the gift of divine grace, through the effectual working of the Spirit ; and this being done by an ordinance, as an external means of grace ; accordingly I am bound to conclude, that as the Spirit of God gives these blessings to believers, who engage in a right manner therein ; so this grace is represented, and God's people have ground to expect, as far

as an ordinance can be the means thereof, that they shall be made partakers of these benefits.

We may also observe, that, though the sacraments are appointed to signify to all that partake of them, that Christ has purchased salvation for his people; or, that the work of redemption is brought to perfection: Yet it is they alone that engage herein by faith, who can look upon them as signs or seals to confirm their faith, that they have a right to the benefits of Christ's redemption, as not only signified, but exhibited or applied to them: In this sense the sacraments are signs to them that believe, in such a way as they are to no others.

4. We are now to consider the persons to whom the sacraments are given; and these are described as those who are within the covenant of grace. To be within the covenant of grace, implies in it, either a being externally in covenant with God, or a being internally and spiritually so, as interested in the saving blessings thereof.

(1.) They who are externally in covenant, are such as are visibly so; who are called by his name, professedly devote themselves to him, and lay claim to him as their God: These, if they are no otherwise in covenant, are said to be in Christ, as the branch which beareth no fruit, is said to be in the vine, John xv. 2. like those whom the prophet speaks of, when he says, *Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness*, Isa. xlviii. 1. they have, indeed, the ordinances which must be reckoned a very great privilege; they have the external overtures of divine grace, the convictions and strivings of the Spirit; and accordingly they are, in God's way, in which he is sometimes pleased to work special grace, which, when he does, they may conclude themselves to have more than the external blessings of the covenant, which is what we are next to consider: Therefore,

(2.) Others are internally or spiritually in covenant, children of God by faith: These are such as are true and real members of Jesus Christ, by a federal or conjugal union with him: They have the same mind as was in him, and receive vital influences from him, being made partakers of the Spirit. They have, not only professedly, but by faith, embraced him in all his offices, surrendered up themselves unto him, to be entirely his; their understandings to be guided and directed, their wills and affections to be governed by him, and are desirous to be disposed of by him, in the whole conduct of their lives. And, as to the privileges which they partake of, they have not merely a supposed, but a real interest in all the benefits which Christ hath

purchased, have a right to his special care and love, which will render them safe and happy, both here and hereafter.

Now, with respect to both these ; they are, each of them, supposed to attend on the sacraments : The former, indeed, have not a right to the saving blessings signified thereby, and therefore, if they know themselves to be strangers to the covenant of promise, they profess, by engaging in this ordinance, to lay claim to that which they have no right to : However, if this be not discernible in their conversation, which is blameless in the eye of the world, men, who are not judges of their hearts, have no warrant to exclude them from the sacraments. But, on the other hand, they who are savingly, or internally in covenant, have not only a right to those ordinances in common with others ; but Christ and his benefits, as was before observed, are exhibited and applied to them, as they have ground to conclude, by faith, that they have an interest in all the blessings which he has purchased.

5. We are now to consider, what those benefits are that Christ communicates to his people in the sacraments, which are signified thereby : These are either,

(1.) Such as are common to the whole church, which are relative and external, rather than internal, as hereby they are distinguished from those that are without. These are advantages, though not of a saving nature : Thus the apostle says, *What advantage hath the Jew, or, what profit is there in circumcision*, Rom. iii. 1, 2. To which he replies, *much every way*, or in many respects, *q. d.* it is an honour which God has put on the church, as taking them into a visible relation to himself, and giving them the means of grace, in which they are more favoured than the rest of the world : Or,

(2.) There are those benefits of Christ's mediation, which are more especially applicable to believers ; and, in this respect, God makes every ordinance, and the sacraments in particular, subservient to the increase of their faith, and all other graces. As faith is wrought under the word, it is farther established and increased by the Lord's supper, as will be considered under a following answer ; and as they have herein an occasion to exercise their mutual love to one another, so they have communion with Christ, which has a tendency to carry on the work of grace begun in the soul, and farther to enhance their love to Christ, who is eminently set forth and signified herein ; and, from the view they have of their interest in him, arises a stronger motive and inducement to hate all sin, that tends to dishonour him, in the whole course of their lives. We are now to consider,

II. How the sacraments become effectual means of salvation :



or from whence their efficacy is derived, to answer that great end.

1. Negatively. They do not become effectual means of salvation by any power in themselves to answer this end ; for we are not to suppose, that they are more than ordinances, by which God works those graces which we receive under them ; which it is his prerogative alone to confer. Again, it is farther observed, that this privilege is not derived from the piety or intention of them by whom the sacraments are administered ; who, though they are styled *stewards of the mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. iv. 1. as persons to whom the administration thereof is committed ; yet they have not the least power to confer that grace which is Christ's gift and work : Thus the apostle says, *Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave unto every man*, chap. iii. 5. (a)

(a) It were to be wished, the inspired books had been more generally honoured, as the only sufficient rule of judgment, by those who have wrote in favor of EPISCOPACY, upon the plan of a DIVINE RIGHT ; and the rather, as they speak of it, not merely as an institution of the gospel, but an essentially necessary one : insomuch, that gospel ordinances will be invalid, unless administered by those, who have been episcopally vested with holy orders.

In a matter of such momentous concern, they would not have acted an unworthy part, if they had confined their pleas to the sacred writings ; producing such passages from them as speak to the point, not implicitly and darkly ; but in peremptory and express terms, so as to leave no reasonable room for hesitation or doubt. It would be dishonourary to the BIBLE, and a gross reflection on the penman of it, to call that an "appointment of Christ," and an "essentially necessary" one, which is not contained in this sacred volume, and with such clearness and precision, that sober and impartial inquirers may readily perceive it to be there, without foreign help to assist their sight. And yet, such help is made necessary by episcopal writers. They scarce ever fail of turning us to the FATHERS in vindication of their cause ; hereby virtually reflecting disgrace on the scriptures, as though they were insufficient, simply of themselves, to bring this controversy to an issue.

In order to reconcile the appeal that is so often made to the FATHERS with that honour which is due to the scriptures, the episcopalian plea is, that they consider these fathers, not as *judges*, but *witnesses* only in their cause. But what are they brought to witness ? Is it, that episcopacy is an institution of Jesus Christ ? If this is witnessed to in the sacred books, of which we, having these in our hands, are as good judges as they, it is sufficient. There is no need of any foreign testimony. If it is not, no other testimony can supply this defect. Are these fathers cited as witnesses to what was the PRACTICE in their day ? This is now generally the pretence. They may, say the episcopalians, be properly appealed to, in order to know the truth of FACT in the ages in which they lived. And if, from their unanimous testimony, even from the first days of christianity, it appears, that GOVERNING and ordaining AUTHORITY was exercised by BISHOPS ONLY, in distinction from Presbyters, and as an order in the church above them, it would argue great arrogance, if not obstinate perverseness, to dispute the divine original of episcopacy. But we must be excused, however perverse we may be accounted, if we cannot bring ourselves to think, that the practice of the church, since the apostles' days, however universal, will justify our receiving that as an institution of Christ, and an essentially important one, which he himself hath not clearly and evidently made so, either in his own person, or by those inspired writers, whom he commissioned and instructed to declare his will : nor can we believe the great Author of christianity would

This is contrary to what the Papists maintain, who suppose that the efficacy of the sacraments arises, partly from an inter-

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have put the professors of it to the difficult, I may say, as to most of them, the impossible task of collecting any thing essential to their salvation from the voluminous records of antiquity. We are rather persuaded, he has ordered every article that is necessary, either in point of faith or practice, to be so fairly and legibly wrote by the sacred penman, as that there should be no need of having recourse to the ancient Fathers as **WITNESSES**, any more than judges, to ascertain his mind. To suppose the contrary, would, in reality of construction, substitute **TRADITION** the rule of essential truth, in the room of the **SCRIPTURES**, which were "given by inspiration of God;" or, at least make the former so much a part of this rule, as that the latter, without it, would not be sufficiently complete. Such dishonour ought not to be cast on the one only standard of the real mind of Christ.

The Bishop, in whose defence an appeal is made to antiquity, is not related, by his office, to a single congregation of christians only, with one or more Presbyters belonging to it; but his charge is a **DIOCESS**, consisting of a number of congregations, greater or less, with their respective Presbyters. The inquiry therefore is, whether it be an **UNIVERSALLY ATTESTED FACT**, that episcopacy, in this sense, took place in, and through, the two first ages? A Bishop, at the head of a number of congregations, greater or less, is an officer in the church of Christ quite different from the pastor of a single congregation; though he should be called Bishop, as being the **HEAD-PRESBYTER**, or vested with the character of **PRIMUS INTER PARES**. It should be particularly noted, which of these kinds of episcopacy has the voice of the specified antiquity in its favour. It is willingly left with every man of common understanding, after he has gone over the following testimonies, to say, whether he thinks, that Bishops, after the **DIOCESSAN-MODE**, were known in the first ages of the church?

The Bishop, for whom the fathers are called in as **WITNESSES**, is an officer in the church of an **ORDER SUPERIOR** to that of Presbyters, and as distinct from it as the order of Presbyters is from that of Deacons; the pretence being this, that Presbyters were thought to have, in primitive times, no more right to meddle with the peculiar work of Bishops, than Deacons have to concern themselves with the peculiar work of Presbyters. The question therefore is, Whether it will appear from the following evidence, to be at all a **FACT**, much less an **UNIVERSALLY** known, and certainly attested one, that there were Bishops, in this sense, in any church, in any part of the christian world, within the two first centuries?

The Bishop, in whose favour the ancient Fathers are said universally to speak, is one to whom the **EXCLUSIVE RIGHT OF GOVERNMENT** has been committed by the appointment of Jesus Christ, or his apostles as commissioned by him. Says the famous Bishop Hoadly, treating of the government of the church, as belonging to Bishops only, in the above appropriated sense, "And here—I think I  
"may say, that we have as universal and as unanimous a testimony of all  
"writers, and historians from the apostles' days, as could reasonably be expected or desired: every one, who speaks of the government of the church, in  
"any place, witnessing, that episcopacy was the settled form; and every one,  
"who hath occasion to speak of the original of it, tracing it up to the apostles' days, and fixing it upon their decree.—Were there only testimonies to be produced, that this was the government of the church in all ages, it would be but  
"reasonable to conclude it of apostolical institution;—but when we find the  
"same persons witnessing, not only that it was episcopal, but that it was of  
"apostolical institution, and delivered down from the beginning as such, this  
"adds weight to the matter, and makes it more undoubted. So that here are  
"two points to which they bear witness, that this was the government of the  
"church in their days, and that it was of apostolical institution. And in these  
"there is such a constancy and unanimity, that even St. Jerom himself traces up  
"episcopacy to the very apostles, and makes it of their institution."—He adds,  
"All churches and christians, as far as we know, seem to have been agreed, in

nal virtue which there is in them, to confer grace, (which they illustrate by a far-fetched similitude, taken from the virtue

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"this point, amidst all their other differences, as universally as can well be imagined." One would suppose, from the peremptory manner in which this citation is expressed, that the **FACT** it affirms was so evidently clear, as to leave no room for the least doubt. Those, who may think it worth while to look over the *testimonies* brought to view, in the following pages, will perhaps, by critically observing their real and just import, be surprized, that any man of learning, who professes a regard to truth, should speak of it, and with such a degree of assurance, as the **UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF ALL AGES** from the apostles, that episcopacy, in the impleaded sense, was the "form of government in the church in their day," and that it was by "apostolical institution;" especially, if they should not be able to find, as it is certain they will not, so much as a single witness, for two hundred years, whose evidence is clear, direct, express, and full, in affirming, either that this was the form of government in the church, or that it was ever instituted by Christ, or his apostles: so far is it from the truth, that this is a **FACT UNANIMOUSLY AND CONSTANTLY TESTIFIED TO**, even from the beginning, and through all ages.

The Bishop, for the support of whose claims antiquity is repaired to, is one with whom the **SOLE POWER OF ORDINATION** is lodged; insomuch, that he only can convey holy orders conformably to the appointment of Jesus Christ; and should Presbyters presume to do this, they would take that upon them which they have no more a right to, than Deacons have to baptise, or administer the Lord's supper. This part of the **UNANIMOUS** report of **ALL AGES** concerning the **EXCLUSIVE RIGHT** of Bishops deserves most of all the special notice of the reader; and he is particularly desired, as he goes along, to point out to himself, for his own satisfaction; or to others, for their information, any one among all the testimonies he will have placed before his view, that plainly and directly affirms the **RIGHT OF ORDINATION** to be peculiar to Bishops as a distinct order from Presbyters, and superior to them; or that this right was ever thus exercised by them. If he should not be able to do this, as unquestionably he will not, how strange must that affirmation appear, which says in the most positive terms, not only that this is **FACT**, but a **FACT CONSTANTLY AND UNANIMOUSLY** witnessed to by the fathers, in **ALL AGES** from the days of the apostles.

The Bishop, in whose defence antiquity is pleaded, is vested with the power of **CONFIRMATION**, according to the mode of the church of England; and it is appropriated to him as his right in distinction from all others. But I need not assure the reader, he will in vain look to find it a **FACT**, within the two first ages, that Bishops were either vested with, or ever exercised this power. For he must come down below these ages, before a word is said, by any one of the fathers, relative to this superstitious practice. Tertullian is the first that mentions it; and he mentions likewise some other corruptions, which had got mingled with christianity in that day.

In short, the question in debate, so far as it relates to **FACT**, is, not whether there were officers in the christian church, known by the name of Bishops in the apostolic age, and down along through the two first centuries? We join with the episcopalians in affirming this to be a truth universally testified to in those times: but the proper question is, what is **FACT** with reference to the **ORDER** of these Bishops, and the **POWERS PECULIAR TO THEIR OFFICE**, and as **EXERCISED** by them in it? The name of Bishop is one thing, and the **POWER** claimed for, or exercised by him, is another. The dispute is, not about the name, but the **POWER** appropriated to it. This therefore should be heedfully attended to by all, in their examination of the evidences that will be produced; and they may, in this way, clearly and satisfactorily determine, each one for himself, whether it be at all an attested **FACT**, much less a **CONSTANT AND UNANIMOUSLY ATTESTED ONE**, from the apostles days, and down along through the two first ages, as well as after ones, that Bishops were vested with, and did actually exercise, the above specified powers, which are at this day claimed for them, as the appropriate work of their office by divine appointment?

which there is in food, to nourish the body, which is nothing to the purpose, since no external act of religion can have a tendency to nourish the soul, without the internal efficacious grace of the Spirit accompanying it;) and partly from the design or intention of the priest that administers them, as they are consecrated and designed, by him, for that end.

There is also an absurd notion which is maintained by some Protestants, as well as the Papists, *viz.* that the sacrament of baptism, administered to infants, washes away the guilt of original sin, and gives them a right and title to heaven, so that by virtue thereof they are saved, if they happen to die before they commit actual sin: But this account of the manner in which the sacraments become effectual to salvation, is absurd to the last degree; for it puts a sanctifying and saving virtue into that which is no more than an outward and ordinary means of grace. And as to what respects the efficacy of the sacraments, arising from the intention of him that administers them; that is, to lay the whole stress of our salvation on the secret design of men, in whose power it is supposed to be, to render or prevent these ordinances from being means of grace; which is in the highest degree derogatory to the glory of God.

2. Positively. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they were instituted. As, *without Christ we can do nothing*, John xv. 5. so without his blessing we can receive nothing. Ordinances are only the channel through which grace is conveyed; but Christ is the author and finisher of faith; and this he does by his Spirit, when he brings the heart into a good frame, and excites suitable acts of faith and love in those who are engaged in those ordinances, and maintains the lively impressions thereof, which have a tendency to promote the work of grace in the whole conduct of their lives.

III. We proceed to consider, what sacraments Christ has instituted under the New Testament-dispensation. It hath pleased God, in every age of the world, to instruct his people by sacramental signs, as an addition to those other ways, in which he communicates his mind and will to them. Even our first parents, in their state of innocency, had the tree of life; which was a sacrament or ordinance for their faith, that if they retained their integrity, and performed the conditions of the covenant which they were under, they might hereby be led into a farther conviction that they should certainly attain the blessings promised therein: And, some think, that the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, was another sacramental sign, whereby they were given to understand, that if they sinned, they should die. And paradise, in which they were placed, was a sacra-

ment, or a kind of type of the heavenly state; inasmuch as there is an allusion to it in that promise, *to him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, that is in the midst of the paradise of God*, Rev. ii. 7. and heaven is, in another place called *paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43. Others think the Sabbath was a sacramental sign to our first parents, of that eternal sabbatism which they should celebrate in a better world, in case they yielded perfect obedience as being the condition of the covenant they were under. However, I desire not to be too peremptory as to this matter; it is enough to my present purpose, to consider the tree of life as a sacrament; whereby it appears, that God instituted such signs from the beginning of the world: But this having been insisted on elsewhere \*, we pass it over, and proceed to consider,

That, after the fall of man, there were sacramental signs, instituted as ordinances for the faith of the church in the promised Messiah; especially sacrifices, which signified their expectation that he would make atonement for sin, by the shedding of his blood. Under the ceremonial law there was a large body of sacramental ordinances, or institutions, otherwise called, types of Christ, and the way of salvation by him; some of which were occasional; as manna, the water of the rock, and the brazen serpent in the wilderness, &c. others were standing ordinances in the church, as long as the ceremonial law continued; as circumcision, the passover, and many things contained in the temple-service. These were the sacraments under the Old Testament: But, having taken occasion to speak something concerning them elsewhere †, I shall confine myself to those sacraments which Christ has instituted under the New Testament; which are only two, baptism, and the Lord's supper.

The Papists, indeed, have added five more to them, though without a divine warrant; to give countenance to which, they pervert the sense of some scriptures, occasionally brought for that purpose. One of the sacraments which they have added, is, what they call *holy orders*; whereby they authorize persons to perform the office of priests, or deacons: This they do by the imposition of hands, and at the same time pretend to confer the Holy Ghost: The former, they suppose to be the sign, the latter the thing signified; but this was not designed to be a sacrament given to the church; for the sacraments are ordinances that belong to all believers, and not only ministers. And, as for the imposition of hands, whether it be considered as an ancient form of praying for a blessing on persons, or as used in setting others apart to an office; it seems principally to

\* See vol. II. page 86.

† See vol. III. page 424—426. and vol. II. page 205.



have respect to these extraordinary gifts, which they expected to qualify them for the discharge thereof; which gifts being now ceased, the imposition of hands cannot be reckoned a sacramental sign; and the blessing conferred, to wit, the Holy Ghost, from whom they received those extraordinary gifts, is no longer to be signified thereby.

Another sacrament which the Papists add, is that of *confirmation*; by which they pretend, that children, who, in baptism, were made members of Christ, are strengthened and confirmed in the faith; and receive the Holy Ghost, in order to their performing their baptismal vow: But, whatever engagement they are laid under, by this ordinance, it is God alone that can confirm or strengthen, and enable them to walk answerable thereunto; which is a grace not in the power of man to bestow, nor can it be by any ordinance.

Another sacrament they speak of, is *penance*; in which, after auricular confession made to the priest, and some external marks of sorrow expressed by the penitent, he is to perform some difficult service enjoined, which they call penance; whereby he makes satisfaction for his sins, upon which, he is absolved from them. But this is an abominable practice, by which persons are rather hardened in sin, than delivered from it. It is derogatory to Christ's satisfaction, and has not the least appearance of a sacrament, or ordinance of God's appointment.

Another sacrament that they have added, is *extreme unction*; taken from James v. 14, 15. where the apostle speaks of sick persons being *anointed with oil in the name of the Lord*; and it is said, *the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up*; and, if he has committed *sins*, they shall be *forgiven him*. But to this it may be replied, that though this practice of anointing the sick with oil, was observed in the first age of the church, while the miraculous gift of healing was continued; yet it is now ceased; therefore no such significant sign is to be used. And, as for forgiveness of sins, mentioned by the apostle that seems not to have been conferred by the use of that sign; but it was humbly expected and hoped for, as an answer of prayer: It is therefore a very preposterous thing to reckon this among the sacraments, under the gospel dispensation.

Another Sacrament that the Papists add, is that of *matrimony*; for which, they have very little shadow of reason; but, because, they suppose, the apostle calls it *a great mystery*, Eph. v. 32. which word, the Greek church used to signify a sacrament: But he does not intend hereby, that marriage is a mystery; but the union between Christ and his church, which is illustrated by the conjugal union, is so



called \* ; and, indeed, it is not an ordinance given to the church, but to mankind in general, heathens as well as Christians. Therefore nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that it is one of the sacraments Christ hath instituted in the gospel-church ; and, according to their opinion, the priests are excluded from this sacrament, inasmuch as they are forbidden to marry, as the laity are excluded from the sacrament of holy orders ; so that when they pretend to add to those institutions, which Christ hath given to the church, or invent sacraments, which he hath not ordained, they betray not only their own folly, but bold presumption ; therefore we must conclude, that there are only two sacraments that Christ hath given to his church, to wit, baptism, and the Lord's supper ; which are particularly considered in some following answers.

**QUEST. CLXV.** *What is baptism ?*

**ANSW.** Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit ; of adoption and resurrection unto everlasting life ; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement, to be wholly and only the Lord's.

**T**HE method in which we shall endeavour to explain this answer shall be,

I. To prove that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, instituted by Christ, in which there is to be, some way or other, the application of water.

II. That this is to be performed in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And,

III. What is signified therein, and what engagements are laid upon the person baptized.

I. To prove that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, instituted by Christ, in which there is to be, some way or other, the application of water. Here let it be considered,

1. That there must be the application of water ; and that either by dipping the person that is to be baptized into the water, or by pouring or sprinkling water upon him ; otherwise it doth not answer the proper and literal sense of the word

*baptize.* (a) It is true, we sometimes find the word used in a metaphorical sense ; as when our Saviour speaks of the *baptism* that he *was to be baptized with*, Matt. xx. 22. Luke xii. 50. whereby he intends the sufferings he was to endure in shedding his blood upon the cross : And it is elsewhere taken, by a metonymy, for the conferring the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, which they were given to expect after Christ's ascension into heaven, and the apostles were first made partakers of at the day of Pentecost, which immediately followed it ; wherein there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, that sat upon each of them, as a sign that they should be filled with the Holy Ghost, and speak with other tongues, and be enflamed with a holy zeal for Christ's glory and interest ; which was accordingly fulfilled, and seems to be the sense of the word baptism, as taken in this figurative sense ; but we understand the word in the most proper sense thereof ; and therefore suppose that it must be performed with water.

As to what respects the mode of baptism, or the application of water, whether the water is to be applied to the person baptized, or he put into it, that, I purposely wave the consideration of, till we are led to speak concerning the subjects of baptism, that we may insist on the several matters in controversy, between those that maintain, and others that deny infant baptism, together, which we shall have occasion to do under the next answer : Whereas, I am ready to persuade myself,

(a) *Βαπτίζω*, has been said to signify *immergo* and *exclusively* when applied to sacred baptism. And this is necessary to establish immersion as the only mode. The question is not, therefore, whether *Βαπτίζω*, sometimes signifies to immerse, but *whether it never signifies any thing else*. This can be proved, it is presumed, by no Lexicographer, and no version of the New Testament. In the New Testament it is taken in different senses, for example we read of a Baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire. It is therefore a *generic* term and not *specific*, as *immerse* cannot be substituted for it in all places. If a specific Greek term signifying to *plunge* had occasionally been used for it, in the New Testament, yet baptism being in our Saviour's commission to his disciples, should not have been confined to one mode, but this is never the case. The numerous admissions of our divines, that *Βαπτίζω*, primarily signifies to *immerse*, and which are disingenuously collected to impose on the ignorant ; do not weaken our cause, as they did neither influence the practice nor sentiments of those who used them.

If *Βαπτίζω*, signifies to *immerse totally*, or *partially* ; to dip, to cleanse, or purify, &c. it leaves the mode to our convenience or choice ; and reason also records, that the mode is unimportant with respect to moral defilement.—Porphery has "*Βαπτίζεται μὲν καὶ ὡς*" The oracle said "*Βαπτίζῃ* him as a bottle" (of leather, "which could swim) *but it is not lawful to plunge him wholly under water.*" Strabo says, "*Βαπτίζονται ὡς ἕως τοῦ ὤμου*" up to the waist." Aristotle says "*Βαπτίζονται ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ*," it stains and renders florid the hand. Aristophanes says, "*Βαπτίζονται ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ*," stained with tawny colours. Homer says, "*Εὐβαπτιστοὶ δ' αἵματι λυτοί*," And the fountain was tinged with blood. "Rev. xix. 13. *Ἰματίων βεβαμμένων αἵματι*." Isaiah xxi 4. "*Fearful as Βαπτίζῃ me.*"

that what I shall advance under this, together with that which respects the improvement of baptism, will not be much contested by those who are in a different way of thinking, with respect to the subjects of baptism, and the mode of administering it.

2. We are now to consider, that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament; and therefore it differs from those baptisms, or washings, that were frequently practised under the Old Testament dispensation; concerning which, the apostle says, that it *stood in meats and drinks, and divers washings*, Heb. ix. 10. or *baptisms* \*. Thus we read of many instances in which persons were washed under the ceremonial law: This was an ordinance used in the consecration of persons to holy offices; as it is said, that *Aaron and his sons* were to be brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and washed with water, Exod. xxix. 4. and Lev. viii. 6. when they were consecrated to be priests. Again, when they ministered in holy things, or came near unto the altar, it is said, they washed, as the Lord commanded Moses, Exod. xl. 32. for this reason the laver was set between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and water put therein to wash in; and they washed their hands and their feet therein, ver. 30, 31. And this ceremony was used by them, when they were subject to divers uncleannesses; thus, in the method of cleansing the leper, he was to wash himself, and, after that might come into the camp, Lev. xvi. 8, 9. The same thing was to be done by those who were liable to uncleannesses of another nature, Deut. xxii. 10, 11.

These ceremonial washings, when applied to persons, seem to be ordained to signify their consecration, or dedication, to God, in some of the instances before mentioned; and in others, they signified the means which God had ordained to cleanse the soul from moral impurity; which was denoted by the ceremonial uncleannesses which they desired to be purified from. These ordinances, indeed, expired together with the rest of the ceremonial law: Nevertheless, it is very evident, from the institution of gospel-baptism, that the sign is retained; though there are some circumstances in the thing signified thereby, in which it differs from those baptisms which were formerly used by the Jewish church. They were hereby devoted to God, to observe that peculiar mode of worship which he prescribed by the hand of his servant Moses; we are devoted to God, as those who hereby signify our obligation to walk according to the rules prescribed by Christ in the gospel. They also used this ordinance, to signify the cleansing virtue of the blood of

\* *ἁγισμοὶ καὶ ἁγισμῶν*

Jesus, who was to come, and the Spirit that was to be poured forth, as consequent thereupon; we use it to signify or express our faith in what Christ has accomplished, and in the grace which the Spirit works pursuant thereunto; therefore we call it an ordinance of the New Testament.

3. Baptism was instituted by Christ. This is evident from the commission he gave to his apostles, not only to preach the gospel to all nations, but to *baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, Matt. xxviii. 19. (a) and this he appointed to be a standing ordinance in the church, throughout all the ages thereof; on which account he promises, in the following words, that he will be with his ministers, in fulfilling the commission that he gave them to execute, *unto the end of the world*: Therefore, we must conclude, that it is a standing ordinance in the church, and not designed to be observed only during the first age thereof, till Christianity universally obtained. This we assert in opposition to the Socinians, who suppose, that baptism was, indeed, instituted by Christ; but the design hereof, was only to be an external badge, or sign, of the heathens embracing the Christian reli-

(a) The promulgation of this command marks a new and important era in the history of the church and of the world. These words may be considered as the public and formal abrogation of the Mosaic economy; and the authoritative annunciation of the new order of things under the gospel.

The first communications of divine truth, through Adam and Noah, were made indiscriminately to the human family; but, in both instances, the precious deposit was generally adulterated, and nearly lost. The wisdom of God, therefore, saw it to be necessary to select and separate from the idolatrous world, a particular family which might serve as a repository of the divine oracles and institutions, until that 'Seed of the woman' should come, of whom it was predicted, that he should 'bruise the serpent's head.' and that 'seed of Abraham' in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed.

But when Jesus Christ, our great high-priest of good things to come, had, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, to bear the sins of many; and had by this one offering of his own body, perfected them that are sanctified, the service of the first tabernacle was set aside, and as to any utility, or divine authority, ceased forever; as an emblem of which, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, at the very moment of expiation; when Christ our high-priest, by shedding his vital blood and pouring out his soul unto death, offered his one great sacrifice for sins.

So great, however, was the power of early and national prejudice, that the apostles did not, for some time, understand the extent of their commission. They had, before, been sent on a short mission, on which occasion it was ordered, that they should not go into the way of the Gentiles, nor even enter into any city of the Samaritans; and they seem to have thought, that by going into all the world, and preaching to every creature, no more was intended, than that they should go to the seed of Abraham now widely dispersed among the nations. But this view was soon removed, by a particular revelation made to Peter in a vision, and by the calling of Paul to the apostleship, who, from the beginning, received commission to go to the Gentiles, and was, in a peculiar manner, designated and directed, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

DR. ALEXANDER'S DICTIONARY SERMON.

gion, as they were formerly initiated into the Jewish church by that ceremonial washing that was then in use: But the contrary to this will appear from what we shall have occasion to speak to, under a following head, when we consider what baptism was a sign and seal of; which is equally applicable to the church in our day, as it was to those who lived in the first planting thereof.

II. It is farther observed, that baptism is to be performed in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This contains in it a professed acknowledgment, in this solemn act of dedication of the divine Trinity; and accordingly it is an act of religious worship, in which God's right to the persons baptized, is publicly owned, and an intimation given, that all saving blessings, which are desired or expected in this ordinance, are given by the Father, through a Mediator, purchased by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit. This includes in it much more than a being baptized by the authority of these divine persons; which is all that some of the Antitrinitarians will allow to be meant by, in their name: For though no ordinance can be rightly performed but by a divine warrant, yet this warrant is equally extended to the administering, or engaging in another ordinance; and therefore, a being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, signifies more than this; namely, a person's being dedicated to them; in which dedication, a solemn profession is made, that they have a right to all religious worship, which we are obliged to perform as well as that all our hope of salvation is from them: Therefore, some think, that this idea, which is principally intended in the form of baptism, would be better expressed, if the words of institution\* were rendered *into the name of the Father, &c.* as it is rendered elsewhere, Gal. iii. 27. where the apostle is speaking of a person's being *baptized into Christ* †, and explains it as denoting a *putting on Christ*; or a professing, as it is said, ver. 29. that *we are Christ's*. Thus they who are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are denoted hereby, to be professedly their servants and subjects; under an indispensable obligation to put their trust in, and hope for, all saving blessings from them, according to the tenor of the gospel.

It is enquired, by some, whether it be absolutely necessary, in the administration of this ordinance, explicitly to make mention of the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? and some assert, that it is not; because we read of persons being baptized in the name of *Jesus*, in Acts xix. 5. without any mention of the name of the Father, or Holy Ghost; and in

\* *Ἐν ὀνόματι*.

† *Ἐν Χριστῷ*.

chap. viii. 16. the same thing is mentioned, as it is said, *They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*. But to this it may be replied, that it does not appear, that this was the express form of words used in baptizing those that are here mentioned ; but it only argues, that the ordinance was administered, and that Christ's name and glory was proclaimed therein : So that, though the other divine persons are not particularly mentioned, it does not follow from thence, that they did not adhere to the express words of institution, which were given to the apostles ; it might as well be argued, that John did not baptize in the name of any of the Divine persons ; since when we read of his baptism, it is said, *I baptize you with water* ; but it does not thence follow, that he did not baptize them in the name of God ; inasmuch as he plainly confesses that *God sent him to baptize with water*, John i. 33.

But, that this matter may be set in a just light, we must distinguish between a person's omitting to mention the Son or Holy Ghost, in the form of baptism, as denying them to be divine persons, (in which case the ordinance is invalid ; ) and his doing this for no other reason, but because he thinks that we are not to be tied up to a particular form of words, but may sometimes baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; and, at other times, in the name of Jesus : In this case, I will not say that the ordinance is invalid ; but yet, his manner of administering it, will be highly offensive to many serious Christians, and can hardly be reckoned an instance of faithfulness to Christ ; who has, by an express command, intimated what words are to be used therein.

III. We are now to consider, what is signified in baptism, and what engagements are laid on the person baptized. There are some, especially among the Socinians, who maintain, that it is only an external, or visible badge of Christianity in general, signifying a person's right to be called a Christian, or a professor of that religion, which was instituted by our Saviour ; and their design herein seems to be, that they might evade the force of the argument which we bring to prove the divinity of the Son and Spirit, from their being the object of that religious worship, which according to our explication thereof, is contained in it. Did they intend, by being a Christian, the same thing as we do, namely, a subjection to Christ, as a divine person, or a professed obligation which we are laid under, to worship God the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit, we should have no contention with them about this matter : But since we are not agreed as to the meaning of being a Christian, especially, since they intend no more hereby than our being obliged to adhere to a certain scheme of religious worship prescribed by Christ, of what kind soever it be, in like manner as



a person is called a Mahometan, because he embraces Mahomet's Alcoran as a rule of faith, we cannot think this general account of baptism, as an external badge of Christianity, to be a sufficient explication of what is intended by it as a sign, or significant ordinance.

There are several things mentioned in this answer, of which, it is said, to be a sign and seal, viz. of our engrafting into Christ, and obtaining remission of sins by his blood, of our regeneration by his Spirit, our adoption, and resurrection unto eternal life, which include in them all the benefits of Christ's mediation; which have been particularly explained under some foregoing answers: But there is one that contains in it all the rest; and accordingly it is generally expressed, by divines, as that which is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and all the duties, obligations, and privileges that are either enjoined or bestowed therein. What this covenant is, together with the blessings thereof, and how the grace of God is manifested therein, has been likewise considered under some foregoing answers\*. Therefore all that I shall now add concerning it, is, that it contains all the promises in which our salvation is included, of which there is one that comprehends all the rest, whereby it is often expressed, namely, that God will be a God unto his people, Gen. xiv. 1. *their shield, and exceeding great reward*, chap. xvii. And elsewhere that he will *put his laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and will be to them a God; and they shall be to him a people*, Heb. viii. 10. There are very great privileges contained in this relation, namely, our being under the special care and protection of Christ, having a right to what he has purchased, and that inheritance which he has laid up in heaven for his children, their enjoying communion with him here, and being made happy with him hereafter.

Now the main thing to be considered, is, how baptism is a sign and seal thereof? To this it may be answered, that we are not to suppose that this, or any other ordinance, confers the grace of the covenant, as the Papists pretend†; for it is, at most, but a significant sign or seal thereof; whereas, the grace of the covenant is the thing signified thereby. There are, as has been before observed two ways, by which persons may be said to be in covenant with God, namely, professedly, or visibly, which is the immediate intent and design of this ordinance; and there is a being in covenant, as laying hold on the grace of the covenant, when we give up ourselves to Christ, by faith; and, as the consequence thereof, lay claim to

\* See vol. II. Quest. XXXI, XXXII. Page 167, & 185.

† There is a common aphorism among them, that the sacraments, and baptism in particular, confer grace, *ex opere operato*.

the blessings of his redemption. Now baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace in both these senses, though in different respects. The ordinance itself is a professed dedication to God, or an acknowledgment that the person baptized is obliged to be the Lord's; and signifies his right to the external blessings of the covenant of grace, which are contained in the gospel-dispensation. There is also more than this contained in a person's being given to God in baptism, whether it be by himself as in those who are baptized when adult; or by his parents, as in the case of infants, in that the person who dedicates, expresses his faith in Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, and hopes for the saving blessings which he has purchased for his people. It is one thing, for this ordinance to confer these blessings, and another, for it to be an instituted means, in which we express our faith and hope, that these blessings shall be bestowed, the person being devoted to God with that view.

There are other two things that are more especially signified in baptism, namely, privileges expected, and obligations acknowledged.

1. The privileges expected are such as accompany salvation, which are the special gift of the Holy Ghost, viz. the taking away the guilt and pollution of sin, and our being made partakers of all the blessings that Christ hath purchased, and God the Father, in him, has promised to the heirs of salvation. I do not say, that all who are baptized are made partakers of these privileges; but they are given up to God, or give up themselves to him in this ordinance, in hope of obtaining them.

2. Here is a public profession, or acknowledgment of our obligation to be the Lord's. This is, from the nature of the thing, implied in its being a dedication to God. When we make a surrender of ourselves to him, we do hereby declare, that we are willing to be his servants and subjects, and entirely at his disposal: This is contained in a fiducial act of self-dedication to God, and cannot be done by one in the behalf of another: And, it is to be feared, that many, who give up themselves to God in this ordinance, when adult, though they make a profession of their faith, yet do not give up themselves by faith; but that is only known to the heart-searching God: Nevertheless, as we express our faith and hope, in this ordinance, concerning the privileges but now mentioned; so we, in this act of dedication, confess, that God has a right to us, and that it is our indispensable duty to be his, so that hereby we are, either by our own consent, as in self-dedication, professedly the Lord's; or this is acknowledged by those who have a right to dedicate, and thereby to signify this obligation; which, because it is highly just and reasonable, the persons de-

voted are obliged to stand to, or else are brought under a great degree of guilt, in not being stedfast in God's covenant.

There is one thing more mentioned in this answer, namely, that the person baptized, is solemnly admitted into the visible church, which I rather choose to pass over; since it is hard to understand what some mean by the visible church, and a person's becoming a member thereof by baptism. We have elsewhere considered the difficulties that are contained in the description of the visible church; together with the qualifications for, and admission of persons into church-communion. \* If, by being admitted into the visible church, we are to understand that a person has a right to all the ordinances of the church by baptism, without being admitted afterwards into it by mutual consent; this is contrary to the faith and practice of most of the reformed churches. And if, on the other hand, they mean hereby, that here is a public declaration of our hope, that the person baptized shall be made partaker of those privileges which Christ has purchased for, and given to his church: This is no more than what has been already explained in our considering the baptismal expectations and obligations; but, whether this can be properly called an admission into the church, I rather leave to be determined by those who better understand what they mean, when they say that this is done in baptism, than I do. (a)

\* See vol. II. page 166—216.

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(a) The Gospel is glad tidings of great joy, not a system of new and terrifying restrictions and exclusions; so far from retracting formerly conceded privileges, and confining the church within narrower limits, it publishes peace and salvation, and invites the whole human family to participate in these blessings. It must either be referred to the impressions it has made, or to uninterrupted usage that females have, by a general consent, been deemed to possess an unquestionable right to approach the holy communion, though neither precept for it is found, nor an example of it recorded in the Scriptures. This baptism of infants was still less necessary to be enjoined by, and less likely to have been noticed in the short history given us of apostolical transactions.

He who gave parental affection, and is the Lord of his church under every dispensation, conferred on children at an early age of the world the privilege of sinning with their parents in the seals of grace, and bearing the tokens of his covenant. Jewish christians having themselves experienced such benignity, and been given to the same God, whom they now served under brighter displays of his eternal and unchangeable love, could not have expected, that, an entrance into the milder gospel-church would have been denied to the seed whom God had given them, and whom they had devoted to him not only in prayer, but in that ordinance which he had appointed for the purpose. An ordinance which being now obsolete was supplied by another, apparently as proper for their children as themselves. Because infants are incapable of repenting and believing, these duties were not required nor expected of them, either under the old, or new dispensation; but though incapable of actual sin, and therefore free from obligations of obedience unto the law, yet their nature is not pure, and consequently needs the sanctifying influence of divine grace, which can correct

**QUEST. CLXVI.** *Unto whom is baptism to be administered?*

**ANSW.** Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but infants descending from parents, either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptised.

**I**N this answer, which principally respects the subjects of baptism, we have,

I. An account of those who are excluded from this privilege, viz. such as are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise. The visible church is here considered in the most large and less proper acceptation of the word, as denoting all who profess the true religion; and in this respect is opposed to the Jews and heathen, and those who, though they live in a Christian nation, are grossly ignorant of the gospel, and act as though they thought that it did not belong to them, not seeing themselves obliged to make any profession thereof: These may be ranked among infidels, as much as the heathen themselves; and, according to this sense

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the latent enmity, and renew the soul. They are capable, therefore, of spiritual blessings, and may consequently be members of the invisible church, and received into the church triumphant. The obvious reasonableness of the privilege of being received with their parents into the society of the worshippers of God, a privilege publicly known to have been conferred by the great Head of the church, equally prevented the supposition of an implied repeal, and the necessity of a renewal of the right.

If indeed there had been a different religion introduced; if christians were not engrafted into the old stock; if they worshipped some other than the God of Israel; if there was another moral law, another Christ than he whose day the fathers anticipated, and another faith; this privilege of receiving infants into the church might have been interrupted; and in that case unless expressly again enjoined, it ought not to have been regarded in practice. But if the christian religion is founded upon the prophets; if the peculiarities of the Jewish worship were but shadows of gospel things; if both were directed to the same glory of God and salvation of men; if they both enjoined the same holiness and presented the same object of faith; if those who were saved under the Old Testament shall be associated with those who are saved under the New; the privileges formerly granted to children will remain the same; and it is not wonderful that the first christian should obey the dictates of parental tenderness; and that desiring the salvation of their children as well as their own, should cause their households to be baptized as well as themselves. To have affirmed in the gospel history expressly, that children were a part of the household, could have answered no purpose in the first days of christianity, but would have been thought repetitions and unmeaning until modern times. In the fifth, in the third and even so early as in the second century, the baptism of infants was the established usage of the church, and it was then thought, and not disputed, to have been the practice of the apostles themselves.

of the word, are not members of the visible church ; and, consequently, while they remain so, are not to be admitted to baptism. This is agreeable to the sentiments and practice of most of the reformed churches ; and it cannot but be reckoned highly reasonable, by all who consider baptism as an ordinance in which a public profession is made of the person's being devoted to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; and, if he be considered as adult (and of such we are now speaking) there is a signification, and thereby a profession made, that he gives up himself to God ; and, if the ordinance be rightly applied, there must be an harmony between the inward design of the person dedicating, and the true intent and meaning of the external sign thereof ; which, by divine appointment, is a visible declaration of his adhering by faith, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and embracing that salvation which takes its rise from them. This therefore must be done by faith ; or else the ordinance is engaged in after an hypocritical manner ; which will tend to God's dishonour, and the prejudice rather than the advantage of him, to whom it is administered.

II. We are now to consider the necessity of their making a profession of their faith in Christ, and obedience to him, who being adult, are admitted to baptism. It was supposed, under the last head, that if there be not an harmony between the internal frame of spirit, in the person baptized, and the intent of the external sign thereof, the ordinance is not rightly applied to him, inasmuch as he pretends to dedicate himself to God ; but, in reality does not do this by faith : And now it may be farther considered, that it is necessary that he should make it appear, that he is a believer, by a profession of his faith ; otherwise, he that administers the ordinance, together with the assembly, who are present at the same time, cannot conclude that they are performing a service that is acceptable to God ; therefore, for their sakes, as well as his own, the person to be baptized, ought to make a profession of his subjection to Christ, as what is signified in this ordinance.

This is agreeable to the words of institution, in Matt. xxviii. 19. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c.* and in Mark xvi. 15. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, &c.* I am sensible that some, who have defended infant-baptism, or rather attempted to answer an objection taken from this, and such like scriptures against it, have endeavoured to prove the Greek word \* signifies, *make persons disciples* ; and accordingly it is a metaphor taken from the

\* *Μαθητεύω*

practice of a person's being put under the care of one who is qualified to instruct him, whose disciple he is said to be, in order to his being taught by him; and therefore they suppose, that we are made disciples by baptism, and afterwards to be *taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded*; and this is taken notice of in the marginal reading of our Bibles; which supposes that the word may be rendered, *make disciples of all nations*: But, I cannot think this sense of the word so defensible, or agreeable to the design of our Saviour, as that of our translation, *viz. Go teach all nations*; which agrees with the words of the other evangelist, *Go preach the gospel to every creature*: And besides, while we have recourse to this sense to defend infant-baptism, we do not rightly consider that this cannot be well applied to adult-baptism, which the apostles were first to practise; for it cannot be said concerning the heathen, that they are first to be taken under Christ's care by baptism, and then instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, by his ministers \*. (a)

Moreover, a profession of faith in those who are baptized when adult, is agreeable to the practice of the Christian church in the first planting thereof: Thus it is said, in Acts ii. 41. *They that gladly received the word were baptized*: And this might also be observed in the account we have of the jailor and the Eunuch's being first converted, and then baptized, in Acts xvi. 31,—33. chap. viii. 37, 38. But, if it be retorted upon us, as though we were giving up the cause of infant-baptism, it must be observed, that this does not, in the least, affect it; for when our Saviour gave forth his commission to the apostles, to teach or preach the gospel to all nations, and baptize them, it is to be supposed, that their ministry was to be exercised among the adult, and that these then were utter strangers to Christ and his gospel; therefore it would have been a preposterous thing to put them upon devoting them-

\* *Vid Whitby in Loc.*

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(a) This then is a repetition; go, *teach*, baptize, *teach*. This commission was to *disciple* the world, baptizing and teaching are the specification, and are participles agreeing with the nomination.

It is no inference from the position of baptizing before teaching are that adults might be first baptized. This was the institution of the ordinance of baptism as well as the apostolic commission; yet it neither contains any direction either as to the mode or subjects; because Christ spoke to Jews, who knew that adult proselytes were carefully examined, whilst infants were circumcised with their parents without such examination. They also knew the various modes of religious purifications among the Jews; both John the Baptist, and they having under that dispensation baptized. Neither is faith essential to the validity of baptism, nor is the profession of it required of such as are incapable of making it.



selves to him, before they were persuaded to believe in him; neither could they devote their children till they had first dedicated themselves to him, and this leads us to consider,

III. The right of infants to baptism, provided they, who are required to dedicate them to God therein, are believers; and particularly, that such may be baptized who descend from parents of whom only one is a believer. This will appear,

1. If we consider baptism as an ordinance of dedication: Accordingly, let it be observed,

(1.) That it is the indispensable duty of believers, to devote themselves and all they have, to God, which is founded in the law of nature, and is the result of God's right to us and ours. Whatever we have received from him, is to be surrendered or given up to him; whereby we own him to be the proprietor of all things, and our dependence upon him for them, and that they are to be improved to his glory. This is, in a particular manner, to be applied to our infant-seed, whom it is our duty to devote to the Lord, as we receive them from him: However, there is this difference between the dedication of persons, from that of things, to God, that we are to devote them to him, in hope of their obtaining the blessings which they are capable of, at present, or shall stand in need of from him, hereafter. This, I think, is allowed, by all Christians. Nothing is more common, than for some who cannot see that it is their duty to baptize their children, to dedicate or devote them to God, by faith and prayer; which they do in a very solemn manner; and that with expectation of spiritual blessings, as an encouragement of their faith, so far as they apprehend them capable of receiving them.

(2.) We shall now consider, that baptism, in the general idea thereof, is an ordinance of dedication or consecration of persons to God. If this be not allowed of, I cannot see how it can be performed by faith, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or how this can be a visible putting on of Christ, as the apostle styles it, Gal. iii. 27.

*Object.* This proposition would not be denied, if baptism were to be considered as an ordinance of self-dedication, but then it would effectually overthrow the doctrine of infant-baptism; for since infants cannot devote themselves to God in this ordinance, therefore it is not to be applied to them.

*Answ.* To this it may be replied, that as there is no other medium, which, I apprehend, can be made use of to prove that the solemn acts of consecration or dedication to God in baptism, is to be made only by ourselves, but what is taken from a supposition of the matter in controversy, by those who assert that infants are not to be baptized: So if this method

of reasoning be allowed of, we might as well say, on the other hand ; infants are to be baptized ; therefore baptism is not an ordinance of self-dedication, since they cannot devote themselves to God ; and that would militate against what, I think, is allowed of by all, that baptism, when applied to the adult, is an ordinance of self-dedication. That which I would therefore more directly assert, in answer to this objection is, that baptism is an ordinance of dedication, either of ourselves, or others ; provided the person who dedicates, has a right to that which he devotes to God, and can do it by faith. When I do, as it were, pass over my right to another, there is nothing required in order hereunto, but that I can lawfully do it, considering it as my property ; and this is no less to be doubted concerning the infant-seed of believers than I can question, whether an adult person has a right to himself, when he gives up himself to God in this ordinance. (a)

(3.) It follows, from the last head, that parents, who have a right to their infant-seed, may devote them to God in baptism, provided they can do it by faith ; and therefore a profession of faith, is only necessary in those who are active, in this ordinance, not in them that are merely passive. This we are obliged to maintain against those who often intimate that children are not to be baptized, because they are not capable of believing : Or when it is replied hereunto, that they are capable of having the seeds of faith, though not the acts thereof ; this is generally reckoned insufficient to support our argument, by those who are on the other side of the question ; inasmuch as it cannot well be determined, what infants have the seeds of faith, and what not ; and, I think those arguments which are generally brought to prove that the infants of believing parents, as such, have the seeds of faith, on the account whereof they are to be baptized can hardly be defended ; because many good men have wicked children.

Therefore what we insist on in this argument, is, that believing parents may give up their children to God in baptism,

(a) To be brought into the visible church, is a high privilege, of which infants are as capable now, as under the former dispensation. Consent is not necessary ; for infants receive inheritances. *This is by force of municipal laws.* But are not the laws of God of equal force ?—*Baptism implies obligations, which can be founded only on consent.* Then it will follow that infants are not bound by human laws, for they have not assented to the social compact ; they are under no obligation to obey parents, guardians, or masters, because they either did not choose them, or were incompetent to make such choice ; they are not bound by the laws of God himself, which is this very case, because they have not consented to his authority ; and if they never consent, they will be always free equally from all obligations, and all sin. Such are the consequences of the above objection:

in hope of their obtaining the blessings of the covenant, (*a*) whether they are able to conclude that they have the seeds of

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(*a*) The dictates of nature, uncontroled by revelation, are the *will of Christ*, and our rule of duty. The *will of Christ*, expressed in these *dictates*, requires us to *benefit* our children as they are capable. *Baptism*, as the initiatory *seal* of God's covenant, is a *benefit* of which infants are *capable*.—This evidence is not *eclipsed*, but *brightened*, by scripture authority, as we shall see in the sequel of this chapter.

Let the reader carefully notice, that we do not suppose, by insisting on this argument, the insufficiency of *direct scripture* evidence : for *this* has been frequently urged with advantage, to satisfy persons of the best dispositions and abilities. That is, reader, “some of the most eminent Pædobaptists that ever filled the Professor's chair, or that ever yet adorned the Protestant pulpit.” But since our opponents insist, that what has been so often urged, is not conclusive ; and *modestly* affirm, it is only calculated to catch “the eye of a *superficial* observer :” they are desired once more impartially to weigh this reasoning, and then, if they are able, to refute it. Let them know, however, that hackneyed phrases without meaning—principles taken upon trust—and empty declamation—must not be palmed on us instead of solid arguments.

Were it necessary, it would be easy to shew, that the principles above urged are no *novelty* ; but are perfectly agreeable to experience,—and to the practical judgment of the most serious Pædobaptists, both illiterate and learned. But waving this, we proceed next to another corroborating proof of the main proposition.

What we contend for is. That it is the *will of Christ* we should *baptize* our infant children. In proof of this we have shewn, first, that the *dictates of right reason* require us to *benefit* them, and consequently to *baptize* them ; as baptism is always a benefit when administered to *capable* subjects. We come, secondly, to shew—That God has constantly approved of *this principle*, in all *preceding* dispensations. In other words—That the *principle* of the last argument is so far from being *weakened* by scripture evidence, that the Lord's *approbation* of it, in his conduct towards the offspring of his professing people, in all the dispensations of true religion, is abundantly *illustrated* and *confirmed*.

Mr. B's misapplied but favourite maxim—“Positive laws imply their negative,” has no force in the baptismal controversy, until he demonstrates, in opposition to what is advanced, that the dictates of right reason must be *smothered*, or else, that revelation *countermands* their influence. But to *demonstrate* the former, in matters about which, on the supposition, scripture is silent, is no easy task. And the difficulty will be *increased* in proportion as the sacred oracles corroborate reason's verdict. Let us now appeal to these oracles.

We appeal to that period of the church, and dispensation of grace, which extended from Adam to Noah. The inspired narrative of this long space of time is very short : on which we make the following remarks. We then assert,

Whatever exhibition of grace was made to antediluvian *parents*, was constantly made to their *offspring* ; and consequently whatever *seals* of grace were granted to the former, must equally appertain to the latter if not voluntary *rejectors* of them. Therefore, all such parents had a *revealed* warrant to regard their offspring as entitled to the *seals* of the covenant, in *like manner* as themselves, according to their capacity. For,

All allow that Gen. iii. 15. contains the promulgation of gospel grace ; nor are we authorised to question the interest of *children* therein with their parents, without an express contravention. For, it were *unnatural* for a parent to *confin*e such a *benefit* to his own person to the exclusion of his children, who are not only parts of his family but of *himself*. To which we may add, that the phrase *thy seed*, though principally referring to the Messiah, respected Eve's *natural seed* as sharers in common with herself in the exhibition of mercy ; and we suppose

grace or no ; they may devote them to God in hope of regeneration ; though they cannot know them to be regenerate, as

not less so than her *husband*. For this application of the phrase *thy seed*, compare Gen. xvii. 7. and Gal. iii. 16. Again,

It is generally agreed, that not only the institution of *sacrifices*, but also the *coats* of skin, (Gen. iii. 21.) were *emblematic* of covenant blessings ; and not only so, in common with mere types, but *seals* of the covenant, as earnest and pledges of exhibited favour. "Who will deny," says Witsius, "that God's cloathing our first parents was a *symbolical* act ? Do not Christ's own words (Rev. iii. 18.) very clearly allude to this ?" As for *sacrifices*, they were slain at God's command after the promulgation of the covenant. For, if Abel *offered by faith*, (Heb. xi. 4.) it presupposes the divine *institution* of them. And this institution, most probably, took place when God—taking occasion from the insufficiency of the aprons of fig-leaves, which the fallen pair sewed together, to cover the shame of their nakedness—himself cloathed them with coats of skins. And most divines agree, that it is very probable, these were the skins of those beasts which were slain for *sacrifices*. However, God gave testimony to these oblations of the ancient patriarchs, that they were *acceptable* to him ; but this cannot be supposed without admitting them to be *divinely instituted*. Besides, a distinction of *clean* and *unclean* animals was observed before the deluge ; which was not from *nature*, but the mere divine pleasure ; and may we not add, with a particular respect to *sacrifices* ? Now,

If, according to Witsius and others, these *skins of beasts*, and *sacrifices*, were appointed *seals of the righteousness of faith* ; I would ask—Was the covenant directed for the use of their *seed in common* with the parents, and not the *seal* in like manner ? For, if the seals be affixed to the covenant for *confirmation* of its contents, as well as, in another view, for signification ; I would fain know, by what rule of construction we can infer, that the covenant *itself* belongs to the parents and their seed *in common*, while the *confirmation* of it belongs *exclusively* to the former ? Is it not contrary to *custom* and *unreasonable* to conclude, that a charter of privileges, or a testamentary instrument, (which by the way express the nature of the covenant) belongs to a man and his heirs *alike*, but the confirming seal respects the former *only* ; while on the supposition, the sovereign, or the testator, has given *no ground* for such partiality ? Besides,

If the covenant itself be a *benefit* to the persons to whom it is directed, as it certainly is in every dispensation of it, it follows that the *confirmation* of it is so ; for parents, therefore, to *deny* their offspring all the share in such common benefits they are capable of, without a divine warrant, is *unnatural*, and an act of *injustice*. We may therefore conclude—that from Adam to Noah, the *covenant* and its *seals* appertained to *infants* in common with their parents.

We appeal next to that period of the church which extended from Noah to Abraham : On which we observe,

Whatever benefits and privileges belonged to the former dispensation, continue to flow on to the present, if not *expressly* repealed ; for the change of a dispensation *of itself*, is no adequate cause of their abrogation. That would be as unreasonable as to suppose that the bare change from night to day was, *of itself*, an adequate cause of a man's being disinherited. Or we may as well say, that the abstract notion of an epoch in chronology has a real influence on the sequence of events. Whatever covenant privileges, therefore, belonged to Noah and his family *before* the deluge, if not expressly repealed, must belong to them *after* the deluge. But,

So far were these privileges from being abridged at this period, that they were greatly enlarged and confirmed, by additional discoveries. For thus we read, Gen. vi. 18. *But with thee will I establish my covenant ; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee*. Again, chap. vii. 1. *And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house into the ark ; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation*. And again, chap.

all ordinances are to be performed with this view, that they may be rendered effectual means of grace. And from hence it

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viii. 20. *And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar.* Once more, chap. ix. 8, 9, 12, 13. *And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you. And God said, This is the token of the covenant I do set my bow in the cloud.* Hence we further learn,

That the covenant or divine charter, first given to Noah, included the preceding; it was the same covenant with additional grants: for the Lord says, "I will establish my covenant." Lest Noah should infer that the drowning of the world in wrath disannulled the well known covenant, God dissipates his fears, by saying, "I will establish my covenant."

On Noah's account, or as belonging to him, all his house or family was privileged. The privilege is,—*"Come thou, and all thy house into the ark."* The ground and reason of that privilege—*"for thee have I seen righteous."* It is true, the natural dictates of reason and affection, whereby a father pitieth his children, and whereby an infidel careth for his own, especially those of his own house, would have prompted this righteous person to bring all his family, (except any adults refused compliance) into the ark, (*the like figure whereunto is baptism*, as an inspired teacher assures us, 1 Pet. iii. 21.) yet the Lord was pleased to brighten his evidence and strengthen his obligations of duty by express revelation.

After the flood the institution of sacrifices continued as the seal of the first part of the covenant; and the rainbow was instituted as the seal of the additional part, or, as Pareus calls it, "appendix of the covenant of grace." And here it is worthy of notice, that as the first exhibition of the covenant and its seals respected the offspring of *federati*, and the renewal or establishment of it to Noah retained that privilege in full force: so also the appendix of the covenant comprehended his seed.

Respecting this appendix of the covenant of which the rainbow was the seal, though we suppose, with Witsius, it was not formally and precisely the covenant of grace; yet we observe, with the same excellent author, "it does not seem consistent with the divine perfections, to make such a covenant with every living creature, but on supposition of a covenant of grace, and having a respect to it." And as this covenant, in its universality, implied the covenant of grace, we are not to deny, but the promises of it were also sealed to Noah and his seed by the rainbow. See Rev. iv. 3. x. 8.

It is observable, finally, that Noah his sons, and their seed were *federati*, in this ratification of the covenant; consequently whatever seals of the covenant belonged to Noah, belonged to his sons, and their seed, while non-dissentients.

Appeal we next to a very important period of sacred history, viz. From Abraham to Moses. On this also we make the following remarks.

The Abrahamic covenant included the preceding dispensations, on the general principle—that grants and privileges continue in force until repealed. Which repealing, if it be not either express, or arise from the nature of the case, in itself plain, can have no binding influence, that is to say, no existence at all: except we maintain, that we are bound to resign an important good without an assignable cause; which is in fact to maintain that we ought to deny that to be, which is.

I suppose it will be granted, that the principal blessing exhibited in the foregoing dispensations was the righteousness of faith; the great importance of which to the human race, in every age of the world, no one will deny who considers things as they are. This covenant, therefore, was in force to Abraham prior to what is called the Abrahamic dispensation; and in this connexion we might mention Lot and his family. But, behold,

A most explicit ratification of it, with superadded favours, Gen. xii. 3.—*In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. And I will establish my covenant be-*



may be inferred, as is observed in this answer, that infants descending from parents, either both, or but one of them, profess-

*tween me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; To be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. ver. 10. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee: every man-child among you shall be circumcised. ver. 12. He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. ver. 24—27. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the self-same day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him. Hence we learn,*

*The nature and extent of the Abrahamic covenant or promise. Whatever blessings are promised to ruined man, must be in virtue of the covenant of grace. All promised blessings, therefore, must imply an exhibition of gospel grace. And the glad tidings of salvation through Christ preached to the gentile world, is expressly called—The blessing of Abraham (Gal. iii. 14.) Not that this link is the first in the chain of exhibited mercy to the fallen race in general, or with an universal and unlimited aspect, if the reasoning in the last sections be just: but for its explicitness, and precious (because expressly diffusive) intendment, it may be justly termed a golden link. In this respect Abraham may well be styled—The Father of us all; not to the disavowal of Noah, with whom the covenant was before ratified, or Eve, who received the first intimation of it, and who in this respect eminently may be called—The mother of all living. The covenant of grace, in its external manifestation, containing an exhibition of exceeding great and precious promises to every human being on the face of the globe, to whom providence directs the joyful news, may be compared to a flowing stream: it proceeds ultimately from the immense ocean of sovereign grace in Christ; its first visible source we trace to paradise, where it rises in a small spring, and glides on to Noah. During this part of its progress, there were but few comparatively who participated of its cleansing and healing virtues, though none were debarred from it. This continuing to glide along, without interruption, (notwithstanding God's awful visitation of a corrupt world by the deluge) we discern through the person of Noah another source, whence is poured forth a second stream which empties itself into the former channel. The streams thus united become a river, which flows on to Abraham—a river to which all are invited, but few come, and these made willing by the omnipotent energy of divine influence which observes the laws of another—a hidden dispensation, running parallel as it were with the former; which was also the case in the preceding period. Then, through the highly honoured person of Abraham we behold another mighty spring copiously pouring forth the waters of salvation, and again uniting itself to the former river; and from him to Christ, with a wide majestic flow, it proceeds along the consecrated channel of the Jewish nation; gradually increasing by the accession of other streams, till it arrives at the Saviour's finished work; where, impatient of confinement, it breaks over its banks on every side, and the healing waters flow to the most distant regions—That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles. (Gal. iii. 14, 8. compared with Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18.) Paul expressly says, that "the Gospel (even the very same as the New Testament contains—salvation by Grace) "was preached to Abraham:" And (Heb. iv. 2.) it was preached to his unbelieving descendants in the wilderness.*

As it is natural to expect, that whatever exhibition of privileges the parents enjoyed should be extended to their children, in common with themselves; so we find that in fact they are expressly included in this dispensation as well as the preceding. The covenant is established between God and Abraham's seed, in the very same sense as with Abraham himself; the essence of which is—to be a God



ing faith in Christ, are to be baptized; since one parent has as much a right to the child as the other: Therefore, the unbe-

*to him and his seed* And lest it should be objected that the term *seed* refers to his *adult posterity* who should tread in his steps, to the exclusion of infants, all doubt is dissipated by the appointment of applying the *seal* of the covenant in early infancy.

*Sacrifices* continuing in full force to *seal* the covenant, till the divine oblation should be made; and the *bow* of the covenant continuing as a token and *seal* of it, until the Messiah's *second* coming; at the commencement of this period is given an *additional seal*—*circumcision*. The very *nature* of the rite shews that all *females* are excluded from being the subjects of it; as well as the discriminating specification—*every man-child*. Here observe in general, that children, in this rite, have the same privileges as their parents. The males are treated as Abraham, and the females as Sarah: *These* therefore, had the covenant sealed in the same manner as their honoured mother. Again: though Sarah and her sex were not the *subjects* of this rite, they were constant *witnesses* to the institution; and therefore there was an important sense in which circumcision was a seal to Sarah and her daughters; a sense analagous to that in which sacrifices were.

Every domestic head being, in truth, a prophet, priest, and king, in his own family; a question must arise, Whether the covenant and its seals are restricted to the parent head of the family, and his children, or else extended to the *other domestics*? Nor would the question be unimportant; for his *instructions*, his *prayers*, and *commands*, answerable to his three-fold office, must be directed accordingly. To this question right reason replies: If the covenant and its seals are *beneficial* to all capable subjects, benevolence requires that they should be extended to the other *non-dissenting* members—except forbidden by indisputable authority. This is the voice of reason; and we find that this is the voice of God. The privilege is common to the seed, and to *him that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger*, which is not of the seed, Gen. xvii. 12.

It has been objected. "that the covenant with Abraham was a covenant of *peculiarity* only, and that circumcision was no more than a token of *that* covenant;" but if so, as Mr. Henry observes, "how came it that all *proselytes*, of what nation soever, even *the strangers*, were to be circumcised; though not being of any of the tribes, they had no part or lot in the land of Canaan? The extending the seal of circumcision to *proselyted strangers*, and to *their seed*, was a plain indication, that the New Testament administration of the covenant of grace would reach, not to the covenanters only, but *their seed*." But it has been proved that circumcision sealed to Abraham and his seed *the righteousness of faith*; and therefore it does not affect the point in debate to contend that temporal promises were sealed *also*.

We next appeal to the long and interesting period from Moses to Christ, On which let the following observations be considered.

Whatever appertained to the Abrahamic covenant was not disannulled by the Mosaic dispensation. This St. Paul asserts in plain terms, Gal. iii. 17.

It may not be amiss to take notice, before we proceed, of Job's family; who, being as is generally supposed, cotemporary with Moses, and unconnected with his history, deserves a previous regard. Of him it is said, that "he *sanctified* his children, and rose up early in the morning, and *offered burnt-offerings*, according to the *number of them all*—Thus did Job *continually*," or, all the days. (Job i. 5.) On this I would only observe, let the *sanctifying* be what it may, the *sacrifices* must have been of divine institution; and used by Job, being an eminently righteous man, as the *seals* of the covenant of grace; with respect to his children *separately*.

Superadded to the foregoing seals of the covenant, is the *passover*; a divine rite of the nature of a sacrifice, instituted in memory of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, representing and sealing spiritual blessings. "As to the *guests*, says Witius, they were, first, all native *Israelites*, who were not excluded by legal

lief of one does not exclude the other from giving it up to God by faith, in hope of its obtaining the saving blessings of the covenant of grace. 1 Cor. vii. 14.

2. The right of the infant-seed of believers to baptism, may be farther proved, from their being capable of the privileges

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“uncleanness. For *all the congregation of Israel* is commanded to solemnize the passover. And, next, the *Proselytes* circumcised and become Jews; whether bondmen born in the house or bought with money, &c. Exod. xii. 48. *When a stranger will sojourn with thee, and keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it, and he shall be as one that is born in the land.*” On this passage in Exodus, Dr. Jennings observes these two things: “*First*, That when a man thus became a Proselyte, *all his males* were to be circumcised *as well as himself*, whereby his children were admitted into the visible church of God, *in his right*, as their father. *Secondly*, That upon this, he should be entitled to *all the privileges* and immunities of the Jewish church and nation as well as be subject to the whole law: He should be as one born in the land.” In short; not only men and women, but also young children partook of this ordinance, *as soon as they were capable* of answering the revealed design of it, for—no positive rule was given them on this head, like that of circumcision. It is manifest that since the injunction respected not only individuals of such a description, but also families *as such*, every member without exception had a *legal right* to the ordinance; and nothing prevented *infants* from a participation, but what lay in the *natural* incapacity to answer the design of it.

“Besides the *ordinary* and *universal* sacraments of *circumcision* and the *passover*, some *extraordinary* symbols of divine grace were granted to the Israelites in the wilderness, which in the New Testament are applied to Christ and his benefits, and said to have the same signification with our sacraments. And they are in order these—The *passage* in the cloud *through the Red Sea*—the *manna* which was rained from heaven—The *water* issuing out of the rock—and the *brazen serpent* erected by Moses for the cure of the Israelites.” To this we may add, among other things, with the author now referred to—the clear and familiar display of the *divine majesty*—and the adumbration of divine mysteries daily *sealed* by religious *ceremonies*. Our subject does not call for an investigation of these particulars, but I would remark in general, that the principle for which we contend, is so far from being weakened, that it is abundantly corroborated by the inspired testimony of every dispensation, and the Mosaic in particular—That it is a common dictate of right reason, children should from their earliest infancy share in their parents’ privileges, as far as they are capable, when no positive authority contravenes it.

From the preceding induction of sacred evidence in favour of children being sharers of the seals of grace in common with their parents, we conclude, that for the space of four thousand years, that is to say, *from the creation to Christ*, it was a rule *universally* incumbent on parents to treat their children as entitled to religious privileges *equally* with themselves, according to their capacity.—And as a counterpart of what was observed of privileges, we may remark that, in virtue of the same uniform principle, often when the parents were punished with excommunication or death, their infant children were included with them. As might be instanced in—the deluge—the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah—the case of Achan the Son of Zerah (Josh. vii. 24.)—the matter of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—the case of the conquered nations (Deut. xx. 16, 17.)—and many more instances, down to the destruction of Jerusalem. Far be it from us to suppose, that the parents’ crimes and impenitence made their suffering children incapable of *mercy*—that mercy which proceeds on an invisible plan, and belongs to a purely spiritual dispensation. Yet, that children, during their *dependence* on their parents, should share equally with them in judgment and mercies externally, is the effect of an all-wise constitution coeval with mankind.

DR. WILLIAMS ON BAPTISM.

signified therein ; and under an indispensable obligation to perform the duties which they, who dedicate them to God, make a public profession of, as agreeable to the design of this ordinance. None are to be excluded from any of those ordinances, which Christ has given to the church, but they who are either in a natural or a moral sense, to be deemed incapable subjects thereof. Some, indeed, are incapable of engaging in ordinances, by reason of a natural unmeetness for them, as infants are not to be admitted to the Lord's supper, as being under a natural incapacity ; and, ignorant and profane persons are not to be admitted to it, as being under a moral incapacity ; and, for the same reason, a wicked man, when adult, is not a proper subject of baptism : But if there be neither of these bars to exclude persons, they are not to be denied the advantage of any ordinance. This, I think will be allowed by all ; and therefore, the only thing I need prove is, that infants are not incapable of the principal things signified in baptism. That they are not incapable of being dedicated to God, has been proved under the last head ; and now we shall consider several privileges that are signified therein, which they are equally capable of ; as,

(1.) Baptism is an external sign of that faith and hope which he has, that dedicates a person to God, that the person dedicated, shall obtain the saving blessings of the covenant of grace ; Now, that infants are capable of these blessings, none will deny, who suppose them capable of salvation. If we suppose infants not to have regenerating grace, which is neither to be affirmed or denied, it being a matter, at present, unknown to us ; yet they are capable of having it, for the reason but now assigned ; and though they cannot at present, put forth any acts of grace, they will be capable thereof, as soon as they are able to discern between good and evil.

They are not excluded by their infant-state, from being under Christ's special care ; which is, doubtless, to be extended to elect infants as well as others ; and they are capable of being discharged from the guilt of original sin, though not of laying claim to this privilege, which they may be enabled to do afterwards. Now, if infants are capable of these privileges, certainly the person who dedicates them to God, (who has a right to do it, inasmuch as they are his property, and he is able to do it by faith) may devote them to him, with the exercise of this grace, and a fiducial expectation that they shall obtain these privileges : And, indeed, when we engage in this ordinance, we ought to expect some saving blessings, as the consequence hereof, as much as when we engage in any other ordinance of divine appointment.

*Object.* It is objected to this, that though a person may de-

vote his child to God in hope of his obtaining saving blessings ; yet he cannot exercise any act of faith, that he shall obtain them : Therefore though he may perform this duty with a degree of hope, or, at least, with a desire hereof ; yet he cannot do it by faith : Therefore, if children are to be devoted to God by faith, they are not the subjects of this ordinance.

*Answ.* To this it may be replied, that some things may be said to be done by faith, when we have not a certain ground to expect the saving fruits and effects thereof. Suppose an infant was expiring and the tender parent concerned about its salvation, whether he has a certain expectation that it shall be saved or no ; yet he may, and ought to be earnest with God by faith and prayer, that the child may be happy when taken out of the world ; and, if he finds that he has the lively exercise of faith, with respect to this matter, this will afford him some degree of hope, that God, who excited this grace in him, will own it by giving the blessings which he desires ; which is the only comfort that a parent can take in the loss of his infant-seed : And, may there not be this act of faith, when he dedicates him to God in baptism ? Did we assert that giving up our children to God by faith, necessarily infers their obtaining saving blessings, the objection would have some force in it ; or if there could be no faith exercised, without our being certainly persuaded that this should have a saving effect ; then it might be argued, that because we are not certain that infants shall be saved, therefore we cannot give them up to God by faith : But if there may be faith, where there is not this certain persuasion, or any ground by which this matter may be determined, then, I think, it will follow, that infants may be devoted to God by faith, as well as with a desire of their obtaining saving blessings, and, consequently, this objection does not take away the force of our argument. We are far from supposing that baptismal dedication necessarily infers these saving blessings, or is inseparably connected with them, so that the one cannot be without the other. Therefore, it is sufficient to our purpose, to suppose that they are capable of those blessings which faith desires, and, it may be, hopes for ; and, consequently, of those things which are principally signified in baptism.

(2.) Infants are under an indispensable obligation to perform the duties which are incumbent on those who are given up to God in baptism, and signified thereby. This respects some things future, (they being, at present, incapable of performing any duty) and, indeed, obligations to perform duties may respect the time to come, as well as the time present ; as when a person is bound to pay a just debt, this obligation is valid,

though it is not expected that it should be immediately paid. Thus infants are professedly bound, when given up to God, to be the Lord's: Whether ever they will give up themselves to him by faith, or no, is unknown to us, nevertheless, the obligation will take place as soon as they are capable of doing good or evil. Therefore it follows, that the parent may bind his child to be the Lord's, inasmuch as the obligation is just, as being founded in God's right to obedience, and when he has laid his child under it in this ordinance, he ought afterwards strictly to charge him to stand to it, as he would not contract double guilt; not only in neglecting to perform an indispensable duty, but to pay that debt of obedience which has been so solemnly acknowledged in this ordinance. These arguments taken from the nature and design of the ordinance of baptism, give me the fullest conviction concerning our warrant to apply it to infants: But there is one more which is not wholly to be passed over, *viz.*

3. It appears, that the infant-seed of believers, are to be consecrated or devoted to God in baptism, because they are included in the covenant wherein God has promised that he will be a God to his people, and to their seed; who are, upon this account, styled *holy* Ezra. ix. 2. And it is said concerning Israel, that *they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their off-spring with them*, Isa. lxv. 23. the *branch* is said to be *holy*, together with *the root*, Rom. xi. 16. and *the children of the promise are counted for the seed*, chap. ix. 8. that is included in that covenant in which God promised that he would be a God to children, together with their parents, as he says to Abraham; *I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and to thy seed after thee, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee*, Gen. xvii. 7. And, in this sense, I think, we are to understand the apostle's words, in 1 Cor. vii. 14. (a) *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband; else were your chil-*

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(a) Tertullian observes on this passage, that if either parent were christians, the children were enrolled in Jesus Christ by early baptism. And it fairly implies infant baptism in the days of Paul. For, having declared that the unbelieving partner was not to be divorced according to the law of Moses, which held the heathen to be unclean; he pronounces the unbelievers set apart by such marriage to God, as far as regarded that marriage; and in proof of this he refers to a fact as known to the Corinthians, namely that the children of such marriages were received into the church, and treated as holy, that is devoted to God. Now if the children of such marriages were not treated as heathens, but owned by the church, and this could be in no other way than by receiving them by baptism, there can be no doubt, that this was the case when both parents were believers.—*Ακαθαρτος & αγιος* never mean *illegitimate* and *legitimate*; and if they did, this would be no proof that the unbelieving party was consecrated to God, so as that the children should be clean and devoted to him.

*dren unclean, but now are they holy.* By these, and other expressions of the like-nature, we are not to understand the special saving grace of regeneration and sanctification ; for that is not a privilege that descends from parents to children by birth, as our Saviour says, *We are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,* John i. 13. Therefore, when some, who are on the other side of the question, think that we intend hereby the saving blessings of the covenant, or that holiness which is an internal qualification or meetness for heaven, they do not rightly understand our meaning. Some, indeed, may have given occasion to conclude that they intend this, who speak of the grace of regeneration as conferred in baptism ; and assert, that it intitles persons to salvation, if they happen to die before they are adult : Whereas, if afterward they appear to be in an unconverted state, by the wickedness of their conversation, they are said to fall from that grace. This is what I do not well understand ; nor do I intend, when I speak of the infants of believers as an holy seed, that they are all internally regenerate or sanctified from the womb ; but they are included in the external dispensation of the covenant of grace ; which must be reckoned a greater advantage than if they had descended from Indians, who are strangers to it.

I am sensible, indeed, that they who deny infant-baptism, suppose that the holiness of the children spoken of by the apostle in the scripture but now referred to, who descended from parents, of whom one only was a believer, implies nothing else but their being legitimate : But that does not seem to be his meaning ; inasmuch as marriage is an ordinance of the law of nature, which all, without distinction, have a right to, heathens as much as Christians ; and the children of the one, are as legitimate as those of the other. Therefore, there is something else intended by their being holy, namely, the same thing that is meant in those other scriptures that we but now referred to, as taken for an external relative holiness, whereby God must be supposed to have a greater regard to them than to others who are styled unclean ; and, if this does not infer, as was before observed, their being internally regenerate or sanctified : yet it is not a word without an idea affixed to it : Therefore we must understand thereby, an holiness in the lowest sense of the word ; as children are said to be *an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb his reward,* Psal. cxxxvii. 7. or, it denotes the obligation they are laid under, by the privilege of their descending from believing parents, to adhere to their fathers' God ; which obligation is professed or acknowledged, when they are dedicated to him in baptism, as has been before observed ; and this is the use which I would make



of this account which we have of them in scripture, to prove their right to be devoted to God in this ordinance.

And, I think, we do not assert this without some warrant from scripture ; for when God told Abraham, in the promise but now mentioned, that he would be *a God unto him, and to his seed*, which is the foundation of their federal holiness ; this is assigned as a reason why they should be devoted to God in circumcision, Gen. xvii. 10. for we cannot but conclude circumcision, as we do baptism, to have been an ordinance of dedication or separation to God : And, in Acts ii. 39. when the apostle had been pressing those Jews, amongst the mixed multitude, to whom he had preached, to *repent and be baptized* ; and encouraged them to hope for the *gift of the Holy Ghost* ; he assigns this as a reason, namely, that *the promise was to them and to their children*, which refers to the promise of the covenant made with Abraham, and his seed ; and it immediately follows, *and to them that are afar off*, that is, the Gentiles, who might claim this promise, when they believed, whom the apostle calls elsewhere, *children of the promise, as Isaac was*, Gal. iv. 28. These who are styled, before conversion, a people *afar off*, were after it reckoned the spiritual seed of Abraham, and so had a right to the blessings of the covenant, that God would be a God to them ; and, by a parity of reason, in the same sense in which the seed of Abraham were children of the promise, the seed of all other believers are to be reckoned so, till by their own act and deed, they renounce this external covenant relation : Now, from hence it may be inferred, that if they stand in this relation, to God, this is publicly to be owned ; and accordingly they are to be given up to him in baptism, as there is therein a professed declaration thereof.

As to what was but now inferred from the infant-seed of believers under the Old Testament having a right to circumcision, because they were included in the covenant which God made with their fathers, that therefore they have a right to baptism ; this is not to be wholly passed over ; though, I am sensible, they who deny infant-baptism, will not allow of the consequence. Some have argued, in opposition to it, that circumcision was ordained to be a sign and seal of that covenant of peculiarity, which God made with the Jewish church, or of those blessings which they were made partakers of, as a nation excelling others, in name, honour, and glory : But this, I think, comes far short of what the apostle says on that subject, viz. that it was *a seal of the righteousness of faith*, Rom. iv. 11. And, indeed, when we call that dispensation a covenant of peculiarity, we intend nothing else thereby, but some external privileges annexed to the saving blessings of the.

covenant of grace ; and therefore, Abraham's faith was conversant on both of them ; the righteousness of faith, which respected his own salvation, and that of his spiritual seed ; and those privileges of a lower nature, which they who were, in other respects, his seed, were made partakers of, by virtue of the covenant, in which God promised that he would be a God to him, and to his seed. Moreover, it is generally denied, by those who are on the other side of the question, that baptism comes in the room of circumcision. This therefore remains to be proved, in order to our establishing the consequence, that since children were to be devoted unto God by circumcision under the law, they are to be devoted unto him by baptism, under the gospel-dispensation.

Now, that this may appear, let it be considered, that God has substituted some ordinances, under the gospel-dispensation, in the room of others, which were formerly observed under the ceremonial law. Thus the Lord's supper is instituted in the room of the passover ; otherwise the apostle would never have alluded to one when he speaks of the other, and says, *Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us ; therefore let us keep the feast*, &c. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. And we have as much ground to conclude, that baptism comes in the room of circumcision, as we have that any gospel-ordinance comes in the room of another, that belonged to the ceremonial law, from what the apostle says, *in whom ye are circumcised by the circumcision made without hands, buried with him in baptism*, Col. ii. 11, 12. where he speaks of the thing signified by circumcision and baptism, as being the same, namely, our communion with Christ in his death ; so that the thing signified by baptism, is styled, as it were, a spiritual circumcision : Therefore, since these two ordinances, signify the same thing for substance, and are set one against the other in this scripture, we may, I think, infer from thence, that baptism comes in the room of circumcision.

And, it is farther argued, that baptism being the only initiating ordinance, at present, as circumcision was of old ; so that the first visible profession that was made, especially by any significant ordinance, that they were the Lord's, was made therein, which is what we understand by an initiating ordinance under the gospel, as circumcision was under the law, then it follows, that it comes in the room thereof ; or else no other ordinance does : But if it be said, that no ordinance comes in the room of circumcision, then the privileges of the church under this present dispensation, would be, in a very disadvantageous circumstance, less than they were under the former ; and if infants received any advantage by being devoted to God by circumcision of old, but are not to be devoted to him

by baptism now, their condition is much worse than that of those who were the children of such as lived under the legal dispensation; whereas, on the other hand, God has not, under this present dispensation, abridged the church of its privileges, but rather increased them.

*Obj.* 1. It is objected, that infants have no right to baptism, because they cannot believe and repent, since these graces are often mentioned in scripture, as a necessary qualification of those who have a right to this ordinance, as might be sufficiently proved from those scriptures in which persons are said first to believe and repent, and then to be baptized; and, in order thereunto, *the gospel* was first to be *preached*, according to our Saviour's direction, Mark xvi. 15, 16. And we read of persons *gladly receiving* it, and *then* being *baptized*, Acts. ii. 41. therefore Philip would not baptize the Eunuch till he professed his faith in Christ, chap. viii. 37, 38. Moreover, this is called an ordinance of repentance, as none have a right to it, but those who repent: Thus it is said, *John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*, Mark i. 4. and elsewhere, that he *baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus*, Acts. xix. 4.

*Answ.* We do not deny the necessity of faith and repentance to baptism, in them who are adult, as appears by those concessions which have been made under a foregoing head; in which we considered, that none are to be baptized if adult, till they profess faith in Christ and obedience to him; and this ought to be accompanied with repentance, otherwise it is not true and genuine; therefore we freely owned also, that the gospel was to be preached by the apostles, to those who were immediately concerned in their ministry, before they were either to be baptized themselves, or their infant-seed. Nevertheless this does not overthrow the doctrine of infant-baptism, since that, as has been before proved, depends upon different qualifications. Faith is, no doubt, necessary in the person that dedicates, or devotes to God: But, if what has been said concerning the obligation which every one that is able to dedicate his child to God by faith, is under, to do it, (as much as he that is able to dedicate himself to him by faith, when adult, is bound to do it,) be true; then we are to have regard only to the faith of him that dedicates, and to hope for the saving privileges of faith and repentance, and all other graces, as divine blessings to be bestowed on the person devoted to God, as the great end which we have in view in this solemn action. (a)

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(a.) All these scriptures which require faith, that is, the credible profession of

*Obj. 2.* There is another objection which is concluded, by some, to be unanswerable, viz. that there is neither precept, nor example in the New Testament, that gives the least countenance to our baptizing infants; therefore it cannot be reckoned a scripture doctrine, and consequently is not from heaven, but of men. (*b*)

it, to precede baptism, are certainly directed only to those who are at years capable of it, and not to infants. These scriptures do not exclude infants whose claim is through the church-membership of their parents, by which they are not "*unclean*," 1 Cor. vii. 14. but *holy*, entitled to the promises made to the seed of Abraham; and also by virtue of the commission to disciple *all nations*, of which they are a part as much as their believing parents; and by the practical exposition of that commission in the universal baptism of infants in the christian churches for the first four hundred years.

(*b*) It may be objected, "If the preceding account be true, that baptism is not an institution *merely positive*, as much so as any enacted under the Mosaic dispensation; then the present economy hath no institutions at all of that kind. This objection supposes,

1. That precepts of a positive nature under the Mosaic dispensation, were absolutely so in all their circumstances; so as not to leave any thing to be inferred by the person or persons concerned, in the discharge of the duty enjoined.—But if these things were so, if the Jewish ritual was so express as to leave nothing to be determined by inference, one might well wonder whence could spring so many *Targums* and *Talmuds*, so many voluminous works intended to explain and illustrate the various circumstances attending the performance of these *positive duties* among others. Are not these *unprescribed circumstances* of ritual worship, and other positive injunctions, what in a great degree swell the interpretations of the *Rabbins*?—The truth is, that there were many precepts under the Jewish economy positive in a *considerable degree*, relative to the *subject* as well as the mode of an institute, and respecting the former, it was sometimes particularly scrupulous, for reasons already assigned; but it does not follow that *any one* of these were so strictly positive, as not to take some things for *granted* respecting the circumstances of the duty, such as national custom, the common dictates of sense and reason, traditionary knowledge, the general principles of the law of nature, &c. And it should not be forgotten, that the administrator of the Jewish rites had the subjects distinguished and characterized in a *sensible manner*, which qualification was to be determined by the same sort of evidence as any *facts* in common life; but the administrator of the Christian rites has no such grounds to proceed on; his commission is of a *discretionary* nature, arising from the nature and design of the institutions themselves, as before shewn.

2. The objection again supposes, that there is some *excellency* in an institution being merely and absolutely positive, more than in one of a mixed nature. But this supposition is vain and erroneous. For what conceivable superior excellency can there be in any precept or duty on account of its *positiveness*? Were there any force in the objection, it would imply that the Christian dispensation is *less excellent* than the Mosaic; as having fewer positive rites, and their proportion of positiveness being also smaller. And it would also imply, that the reasonable duties of prayer and praise, as founded on the law of nature, as well as more fully enjoined by revelation, were *less excellent* than baptism and the Lord's supper; and it would follow, that the services of the church triumphant are in their own nature *less excellent* than those of the church militant; which are consequences from the force of the objection equally genuine and absurd. Our Lord's answer respecting the first and great commandment, shews at once that what is the most *important* duty, is also the most *natural*, and therefore the most remote from what is merely positive; and that is the *love of God*. This

*Ans.* To this it may be replied, that consequences justly deduced from scripture, are equally binding with the words or

matter has been fully shewn before. In one word, the spirit of the objection is truly pharisaic.

Some may perhaps object, "that this has been always admitted as true, that baptism and the Lord's supper are positive institutions of the New Testament; and that many pædobaptists have availed themselves of this fort, in ascertaining the nature and enforcing the obligation of the latter, and particularly bishop Hoadly. And as his lordship's principle, in his *Plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, has been deemed unanswerable, Mr. Foot, Dr. Stennett, and others, have taken but the same method in treating about baptism." To this I reply,

That, as principles taken upon trust, dignified titles, and lawn sleeves, are light as a feather in the scale of argument; so, on the other hand, I am satisfied the bishop of Winchester's positions, taken in a sound sense, nay, the only consistent sense in which they can be taken, are evidently true and important. The sum is this; that all positive duties, or duties made such by institution alone, depend entirely upon the will and declaration of the person who institutes or ordains them, with respect to the real design and end of them, and consequently, to the due manner of performing them." This is strictly true, *in the degree that any duties are positive*, but no further. And to denominate a precept or duty *positive*, though but *partially* so, I have no objection, for the sake of distinguishing them from such as are merely moral, and evidently founded on the reason and nature of things. "Except we observe this caution," as bishop Butler observes, "we shall be in danger of running into endless confusion."

It may be said, "If we resign this maxim, that a positive precept or duty excludes all moral reasoning, analogy and inference, we open a door to numberless innovations, and deprive ourselves of a necessary barrier against the encroachments of popery, &c." In reply to this specious objection let it be observed,

1. That this maxim, whatever confidence our opponents place in it, is a very *insufficient* barrier for the defence of truth, if the objection implies, that it is calculated to defend truth against error, and not error against truth as well. For it is notorious, that there is hardly any extravagance, in the whole compass of the distinguishing peculiarities of religious practice, that is not barricaded by this very maxim. If *Protestants* use it against *Papists*, *Papists* in their turn use it against *Protestants*. If the Quakers are pursued and foiled when they occasionally quit this fort, they soon rally their controversial forces, and, entrenching themselves behind the strength of this maxim, become again victorious. Whence passive obedience and non-resistance? Whence an opposition to all *forensic* swearing, in common with profane? Whence the Quakers' nonconformity to what other serious Christians consider as lawful? Their peculiar mode of salutation and address? Their method of conducting religious worship? The little stress they lay on the observance of the christian Sabbath? &c. Whence the popish absurd figment of transubstantiation, apostolical succession, extreme unction? &c.—On the contrary,

2. Not to distinguish between the *positiveness* and *morality* of a precept, ordinance or duty, and not to ascertain their respective *degrees*; and to deny that the *latter* distinction admits of moral reasoning, inference and analogy, open a wide door to *bigotry*, and numberless glaring abuses of the sacred oracles. By rejecting the analogy of faith and the *design* of scripture herein, we give the most effectual encouragement to every senseless intrusion. And what is still more remarkable is, that the *more firmly* any one adheres to the undistinguishing positive scheme, in reference to any christian ordinance whatever, the *more closely* will he be allied to the interest of genuine bigotry. For it has a direct tendency to make the unprescribed circumstances of a positive rite, *essential* to the rite itself, and consequently to make that necessary and essential which the



examples contained therein. If this be not allowed of, we shall hardly be able to prove many doctrines which we reckon not

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institutor has not made so. How far this is applicable to the antipædobaptist's cause, will be further considered.—The doctrine that teaches the propriety of yielding our reason to positive institutions *as such*, or in the *degree* they are so, is just and proper, as founded on the sovereign, absolute and manifest authority of the Supreme Legislator; and in this view it has been of singular service in refuting the cavils of deistical impiety. But to carry the principle any further, tends to betray the cause of christianity into the hands of infidels, and to breed unhallowed party zeal and uncharitable animosities among its sincerest professors. "For who are most likely to put weapons into the hands of *infidels*; they, who seem to discard *reason* in the investigation of truth, or they, whose researches are founded on her most vigorous exertions, and most rational decisions?—They, who make scripture bow to their preconceived notions, in direct opposition to the dictates of reason and common sense, or they, whose arguments are founded on a *coalition* of scripture and right reason?" Once more;

3. The objection, as it includes Mr. B.'s favourite maxim, and tends to oppose the distinction above stated, involves a great inconsistency with itself. For on what principle, except what they affect to discard, do our opponents retain *some* of the positive rites of the New Testament and reject *others*? Why regard *baptism* and the *eucharist* as of standing obligation; while the *pedilavium* and *feasts of charity* (the former enjoined expressly by our Lord, and both practised by the disciples of the apostolic age, see John xiii. 14, 15. 1 Tim. v. 10. Jude 12.) are judged unworthy of continuance? Why receive *females* to communion, or adopt the *first* day of the week for the christian sabbath? How can they justify their conduct in these matters, these circumstances of *positive* institutions, without undermining their own avowed hypothesis? With regard to the sabbath, indeed, the antipædobaptists are divided among themselves; while some are content with the *first* day of the week, others observe the *seventh*. On this point Dr. S. is very open and ingenious; Mr. Addington appeals to an objecting antipædobaptist, "whether he does not think himself sufficiently authorized to keep the christian sabbath, though Christ has no where said in so many words, *Remember the first day of the week to keep it holy*?" To this the Dr. replies, "There is, I acknowledge, some weight in this objection: and all I can say to it is, that not having yet met with any passage in the New Testament that appears to me to have repealed the fourth commandment, and to have required the observation of the first day, I cannot think myself sufficiently authorized to renounce that, and to keep this." If the doctor is professedly an observer of the Jewish sabbath, he is consistent with himself, however different from so great a part of the christian world; if not, he and his tenet are at variance: analogy and inferential reasoning have got the better of the positive system, which nevertheless must not be resigned, for fear of worse consequences.

Another objection much insisted on is, "If our Lord has left any thing to be *inferred* relative to the *subject* and *mode* of baptism, being a positive institute; or if he has not delivered himself *expressly* and *clearly* in every thing, respecting the question *who* are to be baptized, and the manner *how*; it implies a reflexion on his wisdom and goodness." But this objection is impertinent on different accounts. For,

1. Its force is derived from the supposition that the Institutor was somehow *obliged* to make his will known to men by *one* method only. But is the Great Supreme under any such obligations to his absolutely dependent creatures? What should we say of a philosopher, who, having to judge of any important phenomenon in physics, should quarrel with the author of nature, because he had not confined his method of information to *one* source only, to the exclusion of all others? That his evidence, for instance, was not confined to the information of *sense*, to the exclusion of *reason* and *analogy*? Or what should we say of a person, who having to decide on the truth and reality of a miracle, should im-



only to be true, but of great importance. It would be endless to enter into a detail of particulars, to illustrate and confirm this matter; and I cannot but think it unnecessary, since they who deny infant-baptism, do not deny the validity of just scripture-consequences. (c)

peach the wisdom and goodness of his Maker, because he did not appeal to *one* sense only of his dependent and unworthy creatures, that of *seeing*, for instance, to the exclusion of that of *hearing*? The answer is plain, and the application easy.

2. The objection is guilty of another impertinence, nearly allied to the former: it unreasonably requires *positive* evidence for what is discoverable by *other* means. It is demonstrable, and I think has been demonstrated, that the qualifications of the subjects of baptism (the *mode* also will be examined in its place) is what cannot possibly be determined by any positive rule whatever as such, but must be resolved to the *discretionary* nature of the commission, or the supposed *wisdom* and *prudence* of the administrators, in common with other parts of the same commission, such as the choice of an *audience*, the choice of a *concionatory subject*, &c. Preach the *gospel* to *every creature*, is a part of the commission, but the execution has no *positive* rule. Nor does this commission of preaching the *gospel* prohibit preaching the *law*, for a lawful use, or any branch of natural religion, notwithstanding Mr. B.'s excluding standard, that "positive laws imply their negatives." In like manner, the commission to baptize *believers*, and the *taught*, we contend and prove, does not mean to include *all sorts* of believers and taught persons, but such of them as the administrators judge fit, according to the rules of christian prudence and discretion. And we further insist, as shall be more fully shewn hereafter, that the terms of the commission, *believers* and *taught*, stand *opposed*, not to *non-believers* and *untaught*, but to *unbelievers* and persons *perversely ignorant*. What, therefore, falls necessarily to the province of inferential reasoning, is impertinently referred to a positive standard.

3. The objection implies an *ungrateful* reflexion on the Institutor's wisdom and goodness, contrary to what it pretends to avoid. And this it does, by counteracting and vilifying those natural dictates of reason, prudence and common sense, that our all-wise and beneficent Creator has given us—his *goodness*, in not suspending their operations, but leaving them in full force, as to these circumstances of positive duties—his *wisdom*, in grafting what is positive of his laws on these common principles—and finally, the favourable circumstance of his diminishing the degree of positiveness in New Testament institutions, as well as their number.

Let us now recapitulate what has been said in this chapter—From an investigation of the *nature* of positive precepts and duties, as distinguished from *moral* ones, together with their *comparative* obligations and importance, we have seen, that, in any case of supposed competition, the *latter* claims an undoubted *preference*. We have also seen, that nothing but absolute, decisive, *discernible authority* can turn the scale in favor of the *former*, or, indeed, place any law or duty in the rank of *positive*. Moreover, it has been shewn, that every duty resulting from any discernible *moral relation*, must needs be classed among *moral duties*; that some things appertaining to the very *essence* of baptism, on our opponents' own principles, are of moral consideration; particularly the qualifications of proper subjects; consequently, that baptism is an ordinance of a *mixed nature*, partly positive and partly moral. Of all which an unavoidable consequence is, that our opponents' outcry against all *moral* and *analogical reasons* in our enquiries respecting the subjects and mode of baptism, is impertinent and absurd, and to a demonstration contradictory to their own avowed principles.

DR. WILLIAMS ON BAPTISM.

(c) The commission to disciples *baptizing all nations* is both a positive and express authority for the baptism of the infants of such as are themselves *discipled*.

Therefore, all that I need say to this is, that if the method we have taken to prove infant-baptism, appears to be just; and if the premises be true, the conclusion deduced from them, must be allowed of; namely, that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized, though this be not contained in so many express words in scripture: And, I cannot but think that the objection would equally hold good against Christ's dying for infants, as well as others, or of their being capable of justification, regeneration, and the saving blessings of the covenant of grace; and it might as well be inferred from hence, that they are not to be devoted to God in other instances, besides that of baptism; or that we have not the least ground to expect their salvation; for it would be as hard a matter to find this contained in express words of scripture, as that which is the matter in controversy, to wit, that they are to be baptized.

Here I cannot but take notice of the method which the learned Dr. Lightfoot takes to account for the silence of scripture, as to this matter\*, which is, for substance, as follows, viz. that baptism was well enough known to the Jews, as practised by them under the ceremonial law; by which he means the ordinance in general, as including in it a consecration to God, to worship him in that way which he then instituted; and accordingly they are said to have been *baptized into Moses*. He also adds, that the apostle speaking concerning this matter, as referring to what was done *in the cloud, and in the sea*, 1 Cor. x. 2. supposes that the whole congregation, of which the infants which they had in their arms, were a part, were solemnly devoted to God at that time; which, I cannot but conclude to be more agreeable to the sense of the word *baptize*, than that which some critics give, who suppose that nothing is intended by it, but their being wet, or sprinkled with the water of the sea, as they passed through it; for that was only an occasional baptism, which could not be well avoided. But, if I may be allowed a little to alter or improve on his method of reasoning, I rather think, that the apostle's meaning is, that the whole congregation was *baptized into Moses*, soon after they were delivered from the Egyptians, while they were encamped at the sea-shore; at which time, God, for their security, spread a cloud for a covering to them, and then, as the kind hand of Providence had led the way, and brought them under a renewed engagement, they hereupon expressed their gratitude and obligation to be God's people, by this universal dedication to him in baptism. But to return to the author but now mentioned; he adds, that when

\* See his works, vol. II. pag. 1129. 1132, 1133.

Jacob was delivered from Laban, and set about the work of reforming his household, he ordered them, not only to *put away the strange gods that were among them*, but to *be clean*, Gen. xxxv. 2. by which, as he observes, the Jews confess, that baptism, or a dedication to God by washing, is intended. He also observes, that the ordinance of baptism in general, before Christ instituted gospel-baptism, was so well known by the Jewish church, that they no sooner heard that John baptized, but they came to his baptism; and they did not ask him, why dost thou make use of this rite of baptizing? but, what is thy warrant, or, *who sent thee to baptize?* He further adds, that both John and Christ took up baptism as they found it in the Jewish church; by which he means the ordinance in general, without regard to some circumstances, in which Christ's baptism differed from that which was practised under the ceremonial law; and this was, as he observes, applied by the Jewish church to infants as well as grown persons; therefore, our Saviour had no occasion, (when he instituted this ordinance with those circumstances, agreeable to the gospel-state, in which it differs from the baptism which was before practised,) to command them to baptize all nations, that is, all who were the subjects of baptism, and infants in particular.

*Obj. 3.* It is further objected, that our Saviour was not baptized in his infancy; therefore his example is to be followed, and, consequently, no one is to be baptized till he be adult.

*Ans.* To this it may be replied, that every circumstance or action in the life of Christ, is not designed to be an example to us; and, indeed, there were some things signified in his baptism, that are not in ours, inasmuch as in its application to him, it did not signify his being cleansed from the guilt and power of sin. The only thing wherein that which was signified in his baptism, agrees with ours, is in that he devoted himself unto God, not as expecting salvation through a Mediator as we do, but as denoting his consent to engage in the work that he came into the world about; which he now began to perform in a public manner, which he fulfilled in the course of his ministry, while he went about doing good. Now it was not convenient that this should be done in his infancy; for though the work of redemption began from that time; yet his proving himself to be the Messiah, especially his doing this in a public manner, did not take place till he was thirty years of age, and then he was baptized, that this might be an ordinance for the faith of his church, that he was engaged in the work of our redemption. Moreover, it must be considered, that John's baptism, which circumstantially differed from that which was practised in the Jewish church, as well as our Saviour's, was not instituted till the year before Christ was bap-

tized ; therefore he could not be baptized agreeably to the alteration that was made in baptism at this time, had he been baptized in his infancy.

*Obj. 4.* It is further objected, that infant baptism is a novelty, and not practised by the church in the earliest ages thereof from the apostles' time.

*Ans.* To this it may be replied, that if this could be proved to be true, I should regard arguments deduced from scripture-consequences, much more than the sense of antiquity to determine this matter. The principal use of the writings of the Fathers, in my opinion, is to lead us into the knowledge of what relates to the historical account of the affairs of the church in their respective ages. The main thing supposed in this objection is, that infant-baptism was not practised in the early ages of the church ; the contrary to which will appear, if we consider some things mentioned by the Fathers concerning this matter : Thus Justin Martyr says, we have not received the carnal but circumcision by spiritual baptism ; and all persons are, in like manner, enjoined to receive it, as they were to receive circumcision of old, wherein he refers to that of the apostle, in Coloss. ii. 11, 12. *We are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, buried with him in baptism ;* and, consequently, he supposes that baptism comes in the room of circumcision, as has been observed elsewhere ; and he likewise speaks of their being brought to the water, and there regenerated ; by which he means, baptized, in the same manner as we are, in the name of the Father, our Lord and Saviour, and the Holy Ghost \*. And Cyprian, in a council, wherein there were sixty-six bishops convened, delivered it not only as his opinion, but supposes it to have been received by them all, that infants ought to be baptized before the eighth day, in answer to a question under debate, whether the time in which this ordinance was to be performed ought to be the same with that in which children were circumcised under the law †. And, Irenæus ‡, speaks of Christ's sanctifying and saving persons of every age, infants not excepted ; and therefore they are to be regenerated ; by which he means, baptized ; as the Fathers often put the thing signified for the sign : And Gregory Nazianzen speaks to the same purpose §, that baptism may be performed as circumcision was, on the eighth day ; but that it ought not to be omitted any longer, than till the children are two, or three years old. And to this I might add, the testimony of Augustin ; who asserts, that it had been practised by the

\* *Vid. Just. Martyr, Quest. & Resp. Quest. CII. & ejusd. Apol. II.*

† *Vid. Cyp. in Epist. ad Fid. Lib. iii. Epi. viii.*

‡ *Vid. Iren. Lib. ii. xxxix.*

§ *Vid. Ejusd. Orat. xl.*

church, in foregoing ages; from our Saviour's time; which, had it not been matter of fact, he would, doubtless, have been disproved by Pelagius, and his other antagonists \*.

It is further objected, by those who deny infant-baptism, that the practice of many in the ancient church, who deferred baptism till they were adult, argues, that they did not think it lawful for any to be baptized in infancy: Thus Constantine the great, as Eusebius observes, was not baptized till a little before his death: And, it is well known, that Gregory Nazianzen, and Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustin, and others of the Fathers, were not baptized till they came to a state of manhood; and Tertullian, who lived in the second century, exhorts persons to defer baptism, and adds, that it is the safest way to delay the baptism of infants, till they are capable of engaging for themselves, being arrived to years of discretion †. (a)

\* *Vid. Augustin. de peccat. merit. & remiss. Lib. i. Cap. xxviii. parvulos baptizandos esse concedunt qui contra auctoritatem universæ ecclesiæ proculdubio per dominum, & Apostolos traditam venire non possunt; and in Sermon. x. de verbis Apostol. speaking concerning infant-baptism, he says, Nemo vobis susurret doctrinas alienas. Hoc ecclesia semper habuit. semper tenuit; hoc a majorum fide percepit: hoc usque in finem perseveranter custodit.*

† *Vid. Tertul. Lib. de Baptism, Cap. xviii.*

(a) It is very remarkable, that in those ages and countries, where the mode of dipping has been, or still is, the most prevalent, there infant-baptism has been the most generally practised, and there the mode of baptizing has not been deemed essential. Instead, therefore, of finding all these people Baptists, but very few, if any, of that denomination, are to be found among them. Dr. Wall, who was himself an advocate for dipping, tells us, "that all christians in the world, who never owned the pope's authority, do now, and ever did, dip their infants, in the ordinary use." They always baptized their infants; and, ordinarily, by dipping, but not universally, for they, occasionally, sprinkled them. The mode of dipping was of ordinary use; but the practice of infant-baptism, in those churches who were never under the influence of popery, appears to have been universal, both in ancient and modern times.

We do not pretend to rest the proof of infants' right to baptism upon historical evidence, relative to the ancient practice of the church in this respect. However, if it should appear, that the churches, soon after the apostles, did admit the infant children of believing parents to baptism—if no account can be produced, of any church that rejected them—if no individual can be named, who pretended that the practice was unlawful, or an innovation—these facts will certainly furnish a very weighty argument in favour of the aforesaid doctrine.

Baptism is an important transaction of a public nature. Those christians, who lived and wrote in the earliest times after the apostles, must have known what their practice was, with reference to the infant children of believers. The testimony of these ancient writers, as historians or witnesses, respecting this plain matter of fact, justly claims our most impartial and attentive consideration. It is not, however, my intention to write a complete history of infant-baptism. A history of this kind has been written a century ago, by Dr. Wall, a very correct and judicious historian. This history is highly approved and recommended by the best judges, as being a work of great merit, candour and impartiality.

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But to this it may be answered, that particular instances, or the sentiments of some of the Fathers are not sufficient to

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On February 9th, 1705, the clergy of England, assembled in general convention, "ordered, that the thanks of this house be given to Mr. Wall, vicar of Shoreham in Kent, for the learned and excellent book he hath lately written concerning infant-baptism; and that a committee be appointed to acquaint him with the same." Dr. Atterbury, a leading member in said convention, says, "that the history of infant-baptism was a book, for which the author deserved the thanks, not of the English clergy alone, but of all the christian churches." Mr. Whiston also, a very learned man, well acquainted with the writings of the Fathers of the four first centuries, and a professed Baptist, in his address to the people of that denomination, declares to them, "that Dr. Wall's history of *infant-baptism*, as to facts, appeared to him most accurately done, and might be depended on by the Baptists themselves." *Mem. of his life*, part 2, page 461.

The aforesaid history is still extant in two volumes. The same author has since published another volume, which is a defence of the two former volumes, against the reflections of Dr. Gale and others. In these publications, he has favoured us with the testimony and sayings of the ancient Fathers, with respect to infant-baptism, a few of which I shall produce, as authorities on the present occasion.

Justin Martyr, who wrote about forty years after the apostolic age, says, "We have not received the carnal but spiritual circumcision, by baptism. And it is enjoined on all persons to receive it in the same way." He here evidently considers baptism as being in the place of circumcision, and, consequently, like that ancient rite, designed for infants as well as for adults. In one of his apologies for the christians, he observes, "Several persons among us, of sixty or seventy years old, who were made disciples to Christ from their childhood, do continue uncorrupt."—*Who were made disciples*.—Take notice; for he makes use of the very same word that was used in the commission given to the apostles. *Disciple all nations, baptizing them, &c.* Now, if infant children were made disciples, they were undoubtedly baptized. Justin wrote about 105 years after the ascension of Christ. Those persons whom he mentions were then 70 years old; and consequently born and made disciples, in the times of the apostles.

Irenæus, who wrote about sixty-seven years after the apostles, and was then an aged man, says, concerning Christ, "he came to save all persons who by him are regenerated (or baptized) unto God, *infants*, little ones, youths and elderly persons." He speaks of *infants* and *little ones* as being regenerated. It is evident from his own words that he had reference to their baptism; for he tells us, "When Christ gave his apostles the command of *regenerating* unto God, he said, go and teach all nations *baptizing* them." The ancient Fathers as customarily used the word regeneration for baptism, as the church of England now use the word christening. Justin Martyr, whose name and testimony we have already mentioned, speaking of some particular persons who had been baptized, says, "they are regenerated in the same way of regeneration, in which we have been regenerated, for they are *washed with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*." In this short sentence, the word regeneration, or regenerated, is put for baptism no less than three times.

It is a matter of no importance in the present dispute, whether the primitive Fathers used the aforesaid word properly or improperly. We certainly know in what sense they did use it, and this is all the information needed. I would however repeat a former observation, viz. that by a common figure, the thing signified is often substituted for the sign, and the sign for the thing signified. Thus, the Abrahamic covenant is sometimes put, by God himself, for circumcision; and circumcision, the sign and token thereof, is sometimes put for the



prove that infant-baptism was not practised by the ancient church. As to what is alleged concerning Constantine's not

covenant. Accordingly, baptism has been put for regeneration; and regeneration, for baptism.

We have already shown, that the Jews were in the habit of baptizing the Gentile proselytes, even before the time of John and of Christ. They considered these proselytes as being, by baptism, born the children of Abraham; and therefore expressed their baptism, by regeneration. Accordingly, Christ and his apostles, on some particular occasions, adopted a similar language. Our Saviour said to Nicodemus, *except one be born again—except he be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*. By this new birth, Christ evidently had reference to water baptism, as truly as to the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The apostle Paul styles baptism, *the washing of regeneration*. The ancients commonly expressed baptism with water, by regeneration; for they considered this external sacrament as a sign of internal, spiritual renovation and purification. Irenæus expressly calls baptism regeneration, and says that *infants* were *regenerated*, that, is baptized. His testimony is plain and full; and cannot be doubted by any person acquainted with the phraseology and writings of the Fathers. He mentions not only old persons and youths, but also little ones, and even *infants*. This Irenæus was bishop of Lyons in France. According to Mr. Dodwell, he was born before the death of St. John—was brought up in Asia, where that apostle had lived and died. He was acquainted with Polycarp; and in his younger years, had often heard him preach. Polycarp was John's disciple, had been chosen by him to be bishop of Smyrna—and probably that angel of the church, so highly commended in the 2d chapter of Rev. Irenæus, and those christians who lived in an age so near the apostles, and in a place where one of them had so lately resided, could not be ignorant—they must have known what the apostolic practice was, with respect to infant-baptism—a matter of the most notorious and public nature.

Dr. Lathrop observes, "that Tertullian, who flourished about one hundred years after the apostles, gives a plain testimony, that the church admitted infants to baptism in his time. It is true, he advises to *delay* their baptism; not because it was *unlawful*, for he allows of it in cases of necessity; but because the *sponsors* were often brought into a snare; and because he imagined that sins, committed *after baptism*, were next to unpardonable. He accordingly advises that unmarried persons be kept from this ordinance, until they either marry or are confirmed in continence. His advising to a delay, supposes that infant-baptism was practised, for otherwise there would have been no room for the advice. He does not speak of it as an *innovation*, which he would certainly have done, had it *begun* to have been practised in his time. His words rather imply the contrary. His speaking of *sponsors*, who engaged for the education of the infants that were baptized, shows that there had been such a custom. And his asking, "why that innocent age *mado such haste* to baptism," supposes that infants had usually been baptized, soon after their birth. So that he fully enough witnesses to the *fact*, that it had been the practice of the church to baptize infants. And his advice to delay their baptism, till they were grown up and married, was one of those odd and singular notions for which this father was very remarkable."

This quotation agrees well with the account given of Tertullian, by Dr. Wall and other approved writers. Tertullian was evidently a man of abilities and learning, and in some respects an useful writer. His integrity and veracity were never questioned. But as has been hinted, he held to some strange and peculiar notions. He was not deemed perfectly orthodox by the ancient christians. Being a person of warm imagination, he expressed himself, very strongly, on different subjects, at different times; and some have thought, in a manner that was not consistent. Some of the later Baptists have even pretended that he de-

being baptized till a little before his death, and Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, &c. not till they were adult : This may

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nied infant-baptism. But these considerations do not disqualify him as a witness in the present case. Instead of invalidating, they serve to confirm his testimony.

Dr. Gill says, that Tertullian is the first man who *mentions* infant-baptism, and speaks against it ; and infers that it had not come into use before his time. To this, Mr. Clark, in his answer, replies, “ So he is the first man, I suppose, that “ mentions the baptism of unmarried people, virgins, and widows, and speaks “ against it, and as earnestly pleads for its delay till the danger of temptation is “ past ; till marriage, or the abatement of lust. But will it thence follow, that “ the baptism of such unmarried persons did not obtain in the church till Ter- “ tullian’s time ? Or that it then first began to be in use ? Our author might as “ reasonably have inferred the latter opinion, as the former. But the very “ words, in which he expresses his advice against baptizing infants, plainly im- “ ply that it was a common practice. After all, what is it that Tertullian has “ said against infant-baptism ? He has given it as his judgment, that it would “ be more profitable to defer their baptism, until they come to riper years, and “ were able to understand something of its nature and design ; but he does not “ like the anti-pædobaptists, condemn it as unlawful ; which he would have “ done, if it had been a novel practice—an innovation, contrary to the rule of “ scripture, or without the approbation or direction of the apostles. On the “ contrary, he allows it in case of necessity, of sickness, and danger of death. “ Dr. Gill, instead of saying, that Tertullian was the first man who mentioned “ infant-baptism, and spoke against it, ought to have said, that he was the *only* “ man, in all antiquity, whose writings have come down to us, who has said any “ thing at all against the practice of baptizing infants.” The very advice, how- ever, which he gave, plainly shows, that infant-baptism was then commonly practised. He does not intimate, that the practice was of human invention, or not authorized by the apostles. His private opinion, with respect to the expediency of delaying baptism in several cases, and the reasons which he offered, are nothing to us. We have only cited him as a voucher to an ancient fact ; and the testimony which he has given affords clear and incontestable proof of said fact, viz. that infants were baptized in his times.

Origen, who flourished in the beginning of the third century, and was for some time contemporary with Tertullian, in his 8th homily on Levit. 12, observes, “ David, speaking concerning the pollution of infants, says, *I was con- “ ceived in iniquity, and in sin did my mother bring me forth.* Let it be considered “ what is the reason, that whereas the baptism of the church is given for for- “ giveness, infants also, by the usage of the church, are baptized ; when if there “ were nothing in infants, which wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of “ baptism would be needless to them. And again, infants are baptized for the “ remission of sin. Of what sin ? Or when have they sinned ? Or how can any “ reason of the laver hold good in their case ? But according to that sense be- “ fore mentioned, none is free from pollution, though his life be only the length “ of one day upon the earth. It is for this reason that infants are baptized, be- “ cause by the sacrament of baptism, our pollution is taken away.” In another treatise, he says, “ the church had a tradition, or command from the apostles, to “ give baptism to infants ! for they, to whom the divine mysteries were com- “ mitted, knew that there is, in all persons, the natural pollution of sin, which “ ought to be washed away by water and the spirit ; by reason of which pollu- “ tion, the body itself is also called *the body of sin*, &c. &c.

These testimonies of Origen are full and unequivocal. They put the matter in debate beyond all reasonable doubt, if any credit can be given to them ; and no reason appears, why they should not be credited. It is true, they are taken from Latin translations. Origen wrote in the Greek language. But the fidelity of the translators and authenticity of these passages, have been sufficiently vin-

be accounted for, by supposing that their parents did not embrace the Christian religion while they were infants : and, if

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dedicated by Dr. Wall, even to the entire satisfaction of all impartial enquirers. None will object, but those persons who are disposed to cavil.

I perceive that you have admitted the aforesaid facts ; but have made an unusual outcry against the tradition and order from the apostles, mentioned by Origen. There is, I suspect, more policy and popularity in your remarks, than real weight. It will not do for us to turn those weapons against the ancient Fathers and holy apostles, which the protestants have used with so much success, in their disputes with the Papists.

Let us hear what St. Paul says, with respect to traditions. 2 Thess. ii. 15. "Therefore, brethren, *stand fast, and hold the traditions* which ye have been taught, whether *by word*, or our epistle." And in the 3d chap. 6th verse, he says, "Now we *command* you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the *tradition* which he received of us." So also in 1 Corin. 11th chap. 2d verse. "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the *ordinances* (the *traditions*, *paradoscis*) as I delivered them to you." The apostle was here speaking of christian ordinances, which he calls *traditions*. The original word signifies *traditions*, and is so rendered by our translators in the other aforesaid passages.

Thus, sir, you see in what a solemn manner—in the name of Christ, the holy apostle charged the primitive christians, to hold and keep the traditions—not merely such as had been written by the pen of inspiration, but also those which were delivered to them *by word*, or in an oral and verbal manner, and with particular reference to the rules and ordinances of the gospel. The traditions and commandments of mere men, which pretend to divine authority, are to be rejected. But those traditions are not to be treated with sneer and ridicule, which were delivered by the apostles to the primitive christians—recorded and authenticated by the ancient Fathers—and transmitted down to us, by the faithful historian.

Origen has expressly informed us, that infant-baptism was practised in his time. With respect to this matter of fact, Origen was certainly a competent witness ; and he had every opportunity and advantage for knowing what had been the practice of his predecessors and even of the apostles. Many of the ancient Fathers were illiterate, and descended from heathen parents ; and being the first of their family who embraced christianity, must have been baptized when adults. But Origen was one of the most learned men of the age. He was born and educated at Alexandria in Egypt, but travelled into Rome, and Greece, and Capadocia, and Arabia. He resided for some time in several of the most eminent churches, and spent the greatest part of his life in Syria and Palestine. His ancestors were christians. Eusebius tells us, that his forefathers had been christians, for several generations. His father was martyred, in the persecution under Severus.

It is very remarkable, that his pedigree should have been so accurately ascertained. The occasion was this : Porphyry, a great enemy to christianity, had represented the christians as being an ignorant people, destitute of science ; but not being able to conceal the repute of Origen, for his uncommon skill in human literature, pretended that he had been at first a heathen, and had learned their philosophy. In order to confute this falsehood, Eusebius enquired into his ancestry, and set forth his christian descent.

Origen was born in the year of our Lord 185, that is, eighty-five years after the apostles. He was seventeen years old when his father suffered martyrdom. He had himself, undoubtedly, been baptized in his infancy ; and must have been informed concerning the practice of the apostles, respecting the baptizing of infants ; for his grandfather, or at least his great-grandfather, lived in the apostolic times, and they both were christians. This is the man, who has expressly

that were true, they ought not to be baptized till they could give up themselves to God by faith: This a late learned

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declared, that infants were baptized in his day, and that the church was directed by an order or tradition from the apostles, to baptize them. His circumstances were such as afforded him all the necessary and suitable means for obtaining information. We have no reason to suspect his credibility as a witness; and nothing can be more unreasonable, than to reject or treat his testimony with contempt. It is a circumstance worthy of our *very particular notice*, that Origen and the other ancient Fathers do not speak of infant-baptism as being a practice that was denied or opposed by any one. They mention it as a practice generally known and approved, and for the purpose of illustrating and confirming other points that were then disputed.

I shall now produce the testimony of the blessed martyr Cyprian, who was for some time contemporary with Origen; and next to him, the most noted christian writer of that age. Cyprian was constituted bishop or minister of Carthage, in the year 248, and Origen died in the year 252. The testimony of this ancient saint, to which I now have an immediate reference, was occasioned by a question proposed to him, by one Fidus, a *presbyter*, or minister in the country, viz. *Whether an infant might be baptized before he was eight days old?* The reason of his doubt, it seems, was an article in the law respecting circumcision, which, under the Old Testament dispensation, required that infants should be circumcised on the eighth day from their birth. Pursuant to the aforesaid question, an ecclesiastical council of sixty-six bishops, having convened at Carthage, A. D. 253, Cyprian proposed a resolution of the following import, viz. "that an infant might be baptized on the second or third day, or at any time after its birth; and that circumcision, besides being a sacramental rite, had something in it of a typical nature; and particularly, in the circumstance of being administered on the eighth day, which ceased at the coming of Christ, who has given us baptism, the spiritual circumcision; in which ordinance, we are not thus restricted, with respect to the age or time of administration." To this resolution the council agreed unanimously; as it appears from the testimony of Cyprian in his epistle to Fidus, from which I shall extract a few paragraphs, in order to show the sentiments of those venerable and ancient saints relative to infant-baptism.—The inscription is as follows:

"Cyprian and the rest of the colleagues, who are present in council, in number sixty-six, to Fidus our brother,

"*Greeting.*"

"As to the case of infants, whereas you judge that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born; and that the law of the ancient circumcision is to be observed; so that you think none should be baptized and sanctified, until the eighth day after their birth; we were all in our assembly of a quite different opinion. For in this matter, with respect to that which you thought fitting to be done, there was not one of your mind. But all of us rather judged, that the grace and mercy of God is not to be denied to any person born. For whereas our Lord in his gospel, the Son of Man came not to destroy men's souls (or lives) but to save them.—That the eighth day, appointed to be observed in the Jewish circumcision, was a type going before in a shadow, or resemblance, but on Christ's coming was fulfilled in the substance; for because the eighth day, that is the next after the Sabbath, was to be the day on which the Lord was to rise from the dead, and quicken us, and give us the spiritual circumcision. This eighth day, that is, the next to the Sabbath, or the Lord's day, went before in the type, which type ceased when the substance came, and the spiritual circumcision was given to us. So that we judge, no person is to be hindered from obtaining the grace, (that is of baptism) by the law which is now established; and that the spiritual circumcision ought not to be restrained by the circumcision which was according to the flesh; but that all are to be admitted to the grace of Christ; since Peter, speaking in the Acts

writer attempts to prove \*. Moreover, some who have been converted, have neglected baptism, out of a scruple they have

\* See *Wall's History of Infant-Baptism, Part II. page 52—86.*

"of the apostles, says, *the Lord hath shown me that no person is to be called common or unclean.* This, therefore, dear brother, was our opinion in the assembly, that it is not for us to hinder any person from baptism, and from the grace of God, who is merciful, and kind, and affectionate to all. Which rule, as it holds for all, so we think it is more especially to be observed in reference to infants, and those that are newly born, to whom our help and the divine mercy is rather to be granted, because by their weeping and wailing at their first entrance into the world, they do intimate nothing so much as that they implore compassion," &c.

Saint Ambrose, who wrote about 274 years after the apostles, declares expressly, "that infant-baptism was practised in his time, and in the time of the apostles."

Saint Chrysostom observes, "that persons may be baptized either in their infancy, in middle age, or in old age."—He tells us, infants were baptized, although they had no sin; and that the sign of the cross was made upon their foreheads at baptism.—Saint Hierome says, "if infants be not baptized, the sin of omitting their baptism is laid to the parent's charge."—Saint Austin, who wrote at the same time, about 280 years after the apostles, speaks "of infant-baptism as one of those practices which was not *instituted by any council*, but *had always been in use.* The *whole church of Christ*, he informs us, *had constantly held* that infants were baptized for the forgiveness of sin."—That he *had never read or heard of any Christian, Catholic or sectary*, who held otherwise."—"That no christian, of any sort, ever denied it to be useful or necessary." If any one," saith he, "should ask for divine authority in this matter, though that, which the whole church practises, and which has not been instituted by councils, but was ever in use, may be believed, very reasonably, to be a thing delivered or ordered by the apostles, yet we may, besides, take a true estimate, how much the sacrament of baptism does avail infants, by the circumcision which God's former people received."

No one of these ancient Fathers ever wrote directly in favour of, or against, infant-baptism. In their various discourses and writings, they often mention it, occasionally and transiently, when discoursing on some other subject.—They mention it as a general practice of universal notoriety, about which there was no controversy, in order to confute some prevailing heresy, or establish certain doctrines, that were then disputed. Similar testimonies might easily be produced from the writings of many other ancient witnesses, but this would unnecessarily add to the prolixity of the present work. I will therefore conclude, by stating very briefly, the incontestible and conclusive evidence in proof of infant-baptism, arising out of the well-known Pelagian controversy respecting original sin, which happened about three hundred years after the apostles.

Pelagius held, that infants were born free from any natural and sinful defilements. The chief opposers of him and his adherents were Saint Hierome, and Saint Austin, who constantly urged, very closely, in all their writings upon the subject, the following argument, viz. "*That infants are, by all christians, acknowledged to stand in need of baptism, which must be in them for original sin, since they have no other.*" "If they have no sin, why are they then baptized, according to the rule of the church, for the forgiveness of sins? Why are they washed in the laver of regeneration, if they have no pollution?" Pelagius, and also Celestius, one of his principal abettors, were extremely puzzled and embarrassed with this argument. They knew not how to evade or surmount its force, but by involving themselves in greater absurdities and difficulties. Some persons aggravated the supposed error, by charging upon them the denial of infant-baptism, as a consequence that followed from their tenet. Pelagius dis-



had of their unfitness for it, as many, in our day, do the Lord's supper; and others, it may be, might have neglected to baptize their infants, or to be baptized themselves, till they apprehended themselves near to death, as being misled by a false supposition, which was imbibed by several, that baptism washed away sin; therefore, the nearer they were to their end, the more prepared they would be, by this ordinance, for a better world. However, whether it was neglected for this, or any other reason, it does not much affect the argument we are

claimed the slanderous imputation with abhorrence, declaring that he was accused falsely. In the confession of faith, Pelagius then exhibited, which Dr. Wall has recited, he owns, "*that baptism ought to be administered to infants, with the same sacramental words which are used in the case of adult persons.*"—He vindicates himself in the strongest terms, saying, "*that men slander him as if he denied the sacrament of baptism to infants, and did promise the kingdom of heaven to any person without the redemption of Christ; and affirms that he never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, that would say such a thing of infants.*" Now these difficulties would have been instantly removed, and the battery, which so greatly annoyed them, been demolished at once, by only denying that infants were to be baptized. But they did not suggest or entertain any doubt at all respecting this doctrine. Pelagius readily avowed, in the most explicit manner, the incontestable right, and the established immemorial practice of infant-baptism. Celestius also confessed, "that infants were to be baptized according to the rule of the universal church."

One of these men was born and educated in Britain, and the other in Ireland. They both lived a long time at Rome, the centre of the world and place to which all people resorted. Celestius settled at Jerusalem, and Pelagius travelled over all the principal churches of Europe, Asia and Africa. If there had been any number of churches, or a single church, in any part of the world, not only in that but in the two preceding ages, who denied the baptism of infants, these learned, sagacious persons must have known or heard of it; and certainly they would have mentioned it, in order to check the triumph of their opponents, and to wrest from them that argument, by which, above all others, they were most grievously pressed. It is evident there was no society of Baptists then in the world, nor had there been any of that denomination, within the memory of man. The confession of Pelagius and Celestius amounts almost to demonstration. It proves, beyond all reasonable doubt, that infant-baptism had universally obtained, and had always been practised among christians, even from the apostolic times.

Dr. Wall, who enjoyed the best advantages for being acquainted with the history of infant-baptism, and who made this the principal subject of his studies and enquiries, briefly sums up the evidence on both sides, in the following words: "Lastly, for the first four hundred years, there appears only one man, Tertullian, who advised the *delay* of infant-baptism in some cases, and one Gregory, who did *perhaps* practise such *delay* in the case of his own children; but no society of men so thinking or so practising; or any one man saying it was unlawful to baptize infants. So in the next seven hundred years, there is not so much as *one* man to be found, who either spoke for or practised any such delay, but all the contrary. And when about the year 1130, one sect among the Waldenses or Albigenses declared against the baptizing of infants, as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinion; and they of them who held that opinion, quickly dwindled away and disappeared, there being no more persons heard of, holding that tenet, until the rising of the German anti-pædobaptists in the year 1522."

PELUS' APOLOGY.



maintaining, our design being principally to prove, that it was practised in the early ages of the church; and, in what instances soever it was omitted, it was not because they denied that the infants of believing parents had a right to it. As to several things mentioned by the authors before cited, and others that treat on that subject, whereby they seem to maintain the absolute necessity thereof, to wash away the pollution of sin; or, when they assert, that it is as necessary to salvation as regenerating grace, we have nothing to say as to this method of reasoning: However, whatever they speak in defence of it, is a sufficient evidence that it is not a practice of late invention.

As to what respects Tertullian's advice to defer baptism till persons were capable to engage for themselves; this caution argues, that it was practised by some, which is the principal thing designed to be proved. And the reason assigned by him for the neglect of baptism, being this, because the sureties, who undertook to instruct them in the doctrines of religion, often promised more than they made conscience of performing, and so brought themselves into a snare thereby; therefore, for their sakes, infant-baptism, which could not be administered without sureties, had better be delayed; this only proves that he was against infant-baptism for some prudential reasons, as it was attended with this inconvenience, not that he thought it was in itself unlawful to be practised by them. From hence we may conclude, that the objection taken from infant-baptism, being supposed to be a novelty, does not weaken the cause we are maintaining\*. Thus concerning the subjects of baptism.

We are now to consider the mode thereof, or what we are to understand by the word baptism. It is said, in the foregoing answer, to be the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. There has been a great dispute in the world, concerning the meaning of the word βαπτίζω, by which this ordinance is expressed; from whence arises the different mode of the administration thereof. Some think, that it only signifies the putting a person, or thing, into the water, whereby it is covered, or, as it were, buried in it; which is otherwise expressed by the word dipping. Others (whose opinion I cannot but acquiesce in) conclude that it may as well be performed by the application of water, though it be in a different manner, either by pouring or sprinkling; and accordingly, that it signifies the using the means of cleansing by

\* They that would see more on this subject may consult G. J. Voss. *de baptismo disput.* xiv. Forbes. *instruct. hist. theol.* Lib. x. cap. v. and Wall's *history of infant-baptism*, vol. I.

the application of water, whatever be the form or mode thereof. This argument depends very much upon the sense in which the word is applied to the action intended thereby, either in scripture or other writers. And, inasmuch as the sense thereof, as used in scripture, and other writings, is well explained by the learned and judicious Dr. Owen, agreeably to the sense we have given of the word; I have no occasion to make any other critical remarks upon it, by referring to those writings in which the word is found \*.

\* See Dr. Owen's complete Collection of Sermons, page 580, 581. of dipping; in which he observes, that βαπτίζω, when used in these scriptures, Luke xvi. 24. and John xiii. 26. is translated *to dip*; and in Rev. xix. 13. where we read of a *vesture dipped in blood*; it is better rendered *stained*, by sprinkling blood upon it; and all these scriptures denote only a touching one part of the body, and not plunging. In other authors, it signifies, *tingo, immergo. lavo, abluo*; but in no author it ever signifies to dip, but only in order to washing, or as the means of washing. As for the Hebrew word בָּטַח, it is rendered, by the LXX. in Gen. xxxvii. 31. by μολύνω, *to stain by sprinkling*, or otherwise mostly by βαπτίζω: In 2 Kings v. 14. they render it by βαπτίζω, and no where else: In ver. 10. Elisha commands Naaman to *wash*; and accordingly, ver. 14. pursuant to this order, it is said, he *dipped himself seven times*; the word is בָּטַח; which the LXX. render βάπτισατο; and in Exod. xii. 22. where the word בָּטַח is used, which we render *dip*, speaking concerning the dipping the bunch of hyssop in the blood, the LXX. render it by the word βάπτω: And, in 1 Sam. xiv. 27, it is said, that Jonathan dipped the end of his rod in an honey-comb; the word here is also בָּטַח, and the LXX. render it βάπτω; in which place it cannot be understood of his dipping it by plunging: And in Lev. iv. 6. 17. and chap. ix. 9. the priest is said to dip his finger in the blood, which only intends his touching the blood, so as to sprinkle it; and therefore does not signify plunging.

This learned author likewise observes, that βαπτίζω signifies to wash; as instances out of all authors may be given; and he particularly mentions Suidas, Hesychius, Julius Pollux, and Phavorinus and Eustachius. And he further adds, that it is first used in the scripture, in Mark i. 8. John i. 33. and to the same purpose, Acts i. 5. in which place it signifies to pour; for the expression is equivocal; *I baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost*; which is an accomplishment of that promise, that *the Holy Ghost should be poured on them*. As for other places, in Mark vii. 2. 4. νίω, which signifies to wash; and is so translated, is explained in the words immediately following, as signifying to baptize. And, in Luke xi. 38. it is said, that the Pharisee marvelled that our Saviour had not *washed before dinner*: The word in the Greek is ἐκατέσθη, to whom he replies in the following verse, *Ye Pharisees make clean the outside*, &c. so that the word, βαπτίζω signifies there to *cleanse*, or to use the means of cleansing.

He also observes, that though the original and natural signification of the word imports, to *dip*, to *plunge*, to *dye*; yet it also signifies to *wash* or *cleanse*: Nevertheless, he thinks that it is so far from signifying nothing else but to *dip* or *plunge*, that when it is to be understood in that sense, the words ought to be ἐκατέσθη, or ἐκατέσθη, rather than βαπτίζω, or βαπτίζω; and also that it no where signifies to *dip*, but as denoting a mode of, and in order to washing; and that it signifies to *wash*, in all good authors. He also refers to Scapula and Stephanus, as translating the word βαπτίζω by lavo, or abluo; and Suidas, as rendering it by mactefacio, lavo, abluo, purgo, mundo: And he speaks of some authors, that he had searched in every place wherein they mention baptism, and that he found not one word to the purpose; and therefore concludes, that he was obliged to

But, since the greatest number of christians are not so well versed in the Greek language, as to be able to judge whether those methods of reasoning that are taken from the use of the word which we render *baptize*, are sufficiently conclusive: And, when it is asserted, that many who are undoubtedly very good masters of the Greek tongue, have determined that it signifies all manner of washing with water, as well as dipping into it, this will be reckoned, by them, a very fruitless and unprofitable subject; however, we are obliged to mention it, because great stress is usually laid on the sense of this word,

say, and was ready to make it good, that no honest man, who understands the Greek tongue, can deny the word to signify to *wash*, as well as to *dip*. (a)

(a) Dr. Wall, in the appendix of his reply to Dr. Gale, mentions a remarkable instance, in which the mode of wetting or of applying water was certainly that of pouring, and not that of dipping. It is as follows:—St. Origen, when commenting on the Baptism of John, enquires thus of the Pharisees; “How could you think that Elias, when he should come, would *baptize*, who did not in Ahab’s time *baptize* the wood upon the altar, which was to be washed before it was burnt by the Lord’s appearing in fire? But he ordered the priest to do that; not once only, but he says, do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And do it the third time; and they did it the third time. Therefore, how could it be likely that this man, who did not then *baptize*, but assigned that work to others, would himself *baptize*, when he should, according to the prophecy of Malachi, again appear here on earth?”

We find in the first book of Kings, xviii. 33, that the order given by Elijah was to fill four barrels with water, and *pour* it on the wood and on the burnt offering. This *pouring* of water, Origen, that accurate scholar, who lived in the second century, and was well acquainted with the Greek classics, and Greek Testament, calls *baptizing*. In the very same sentence, he makes use of the Greek word *Baptizo* four times; twice with express reference to the Baptism of John; and twice with express reference to that Baptism which took place in the days of the Prophet Elijah; which baptism, we are expressly told, was not performed by *dipping* the wood and sacrifice into water, but by *pouring* water upon them.

It is also evident, even from the frequent use of the word *baptizo*, by heathen authors, that it does not always signify a total immersion. Mr. Walker tells us, “that Porphyrus mentions a river in India, into which if an offender enters, or attempts to pass through it, he is immediately *baptized* up to his head:” (*baptizetai mechri Kephales.*) Here a person is said to be baptized, although his head did not go under, but remained above the water. This certainly was not a total immersion.

He also instances a case from Mr. Sydenham, as delivered by the oracle (*viz. askos baptize, dunai de toi ou themis esti.*) In which instance, if *dunai* signifies to plunge wholly under water, as it certainly does, then *baptize* must signify something less than a total immersion.—“*Baptize him as a bottle, but it is not lawful to plunge him wholly under the water.*” The baptism here described, resembles that of a blown bladder or bottle of leather, which when put into the water, will not sink to the bottom, but swim upon the top.

The same critical author mentions an instance from Schrevelii’s and Robertson’s Lexicons, 19th chapter, in which case, the primitive word *bapto* signifies a wetting with water, that was certainly less, and very different from a total dipping or immersion. The sentence is this. (“*Baptei men asken, udor de neron dunai pote.*”) He indeed baptizeth a bladder or bottle, but it never goeth under the liquid water.”

To these instances, we might add a well known case, taken from a poem attributed to Homer, called the battle of the frogs and the mice, in which the lake is said to be *baptized* by the blood of a frog. (*Ebapteto de aimati limne porphurea.*) This lake was not *dipped* into the blood of a frog; it was only *bespattered* and tinged therewith.

We could easily multiply authorities if it were necessary. It appears undeniably evident from the Greek classics, and from learned writers and commentators, both ancient and modern, that the word *baptizo* has other significations besides that of a total dipping or immersion.

The most celebrated and respectable Lexicographers and critics have often translated *baptizo* into the following Latin words, *viz. baptizo, mergo, immergo, tingo, intingo, lavo, abluo, midesacio, purgo, mundo.* No one, I presume, will pretend that all these words are mentioned as being perfectly synonymous—of the same meaning exactly. And certainly if the word *baptizo* signify any thing less or different from a total immersion, then persons may be baptized in some other mode.

Besides, if it had been the intention of Christ and of his Apostles, to specify the mode, or to have restricted all christians to one and the same mode of baptizing, they might, for this purpose, have selected from the Greek language words of the most unequivocal and definite signification. If it had been their intention to specify the mode of *sprinkling*, they might have used the word *Rantizo*; if the mode of *pouring*, they might have used the word *Etchen*; if that mode of *bathing* or *washing*, which is performed by the application of water with friction or rubbing, they might have used the word *Lavo*; and if it had been their intention to specify the mode of *dipping*, they might have used the word *Dupto* or *Duno*, &c.

REED’S APOLOGY

to establish that mode of baptism which is always used by those who are on the other side of the question.

I shall take leave to add, to what that learned author, but now quoted, refers to, has observed on this subject; that it does not appear to me that the word *ῥανίζειν* always signifies to wash, by dipping into water, but by the application of water some other way; because it is sometimes applied to those things which were too large and cumbersome, and therefore could not well be cleansed that way. Thus it is said, in Mark vii. 4. that *the Pharisees not only held the washing*, or, as it is in the Greek, *the baptism of cups and pots, and brazen vessels*, which might, indeed, be washed by immersion, but of *tables*, or, as it may be rendered, of *beds*, or those seats on which the Jews, according to the custom of the eastern nations, lay at their ease, when they eat their meals. These, I conceive were washed some other way, different from that of dipping or plunging in water; And if it was possible that they might be washed that way, yet the word may be applied to innumerable things, that cannot be baptized by immersion: Therefore, the general sense that we have given of it, that it signifies to wash, whether by dipping into the water, or by the application of water to the thing washed, may justify our practice, with respect to the mode of baptism, commonly used by us.

*Object.* 1. It is objected hereunto, that the mode used by us, is not properly baptism, but rantism; or, that to sprinkle, or pour, is not to baptize.

*Answer.* To this it may be replied, that this method of begging the question in controversy, is never reckoned a fair way of arguing. If baptism be a using the means of cleansing, by the application of water, which is the thing we contend for, then the word *baptize* may as well be applied to it as to any other mode of washing. That which may be further replied to this objection is, that if the thing signified by the action of baptizing, namely, the blood of Jesus, together with those gifts and graces of the Spirit, which are applied to those to whom God makes this a saving ordinance, be sometimes set forth by sprinkling or pouring clean water upon a person, then it cannot be well concluded, that sprinkling, or pouring, is not baptizing, though it differ very much from that which they who contend with us about this matter generally call baptizing. That sprinkling or pouring, is sometimes used in scripture, to signify the conferring of those spiritual gifts and graces which are signified in baptism, is very evident; inasmuch as it is said in John i. 17. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin*; and this is called *the blood of sprinkling*, in Heb. xii. 24. 1 Pet. i. 2. Therefore, in a spiritual sense, sprinkling is called cleansing from sin; and the graces of the

Spirit conferred in regeneration, are represented in Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. by *sprinkling clean water*; which mode of speaking would never be used, were not sprinkling a means of cleansing. And, some think, that the apostle when he speaks of our *drawing near to God, having our bodies washed with pure water*, Heb. x. 22, intends the ordinance of baptism; yet it alludes to the ceremonial cleansings that were under the law, which were often done by sprinkling: Therefore we cannot but assert, that sprinkling water in baptism, is as much cleansing as any other mode used therein,

Moreover, sometimes the thing signified in baptism, is represented by a metaphor taken from pouring; which, if our mode of baptizing be just, will not seem disagreeable to it; and, it may be, the explication is taken from it, as the conferring the Holy Ghost, which they who were baptized were given to expect, is often called *pouring out the Spirit*, Acts ii. 17, 18. chap. viii. 38.

*Obj.* There is another objection which is concluded by many, to be unanswerable, viz. that when we read of baptism in the New Testament, the person baptized is said to *go down into the water*. Thus the Eunuch did, chap. viii. 38. and immediately after this, he is said to *come up out of the water*; which can be applied, as is supposed, to no other mode of baptism but that of immersion.

*Answ.* To this it may be replied, that the whole strength of this objection depends upon the sense that is given of the Greek particles, which we often render *into*, and *out of* \*. But this will have no weight with any but those who are unacquainted with the Greek language, since it is so well known to all that understand it, that the former of these particles often signifies *to*, as well as *into*; and the latter *from*, as well as *out of*; as innumerable instances might easily be given, was it needful, from scripture, and other Greek authors, in which the words are applied to those things, that according to the natural signification thereof, cannot be understood as denoting *into*, or *out of*. There is one scripture which no one can suppose is to be taken in any other sense but what is agreeable to our present purpose, viz. Mat. xvii. 27. wherein our Saviour bids Peter *Go to the sea †, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh thence, &c.* where, by *go to the sea*, we can understand nothing else, but go to the sea-shore; and yet the word is the same with that which is, in some other places, rendered *into*. There are other scriptures in which persons are said to *go to the mountain*, or some other places, wherein it would be very improper to say, that they went into the place; though

\* 'Εν and ἐξ.

† 'Ες τὴν θάλασσαν.

the word be the same with that which in other instances we render *into*. And the word \* which is sometimes rendered *out of*, is frequently rendered *from*, and can be understood in no other sense: As when it is said, in Luke xi. 31. *The queen of the south came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon*; which cannot be understood of her coming *out of*, but *from* thence. But, this matter being so well known to all that read the New Testament in the original, it is needless for me to give any other instances. †

As to what concerns the Eunuch's *going into the water*, I cannot think any thing else is intended by it, but that he descended or lighted down from his chariot, to the water, that is, by a metonymy, to the water-side, in order to his being baptized by Philip. It is no uncommon mode of speaking, to say, that a person goes down to the river-side, to take water, or to the well, to draw it; therefore, this is no strain on the sense of the word; and I am the rather inclined to give into this opinion, because some modern travellers, taking notice of the place where this was done, intimate, that it was only a spring of water; and therefore without sufficient depth to plunge the body in: And some ancient writers, who lived between three and four hundred years after our Saviour's time, as Jerom and Eusebius, intimate the same thing. If it be said, that these may be mistaken as to the place, inasmuch as the particular spot of ground in which this water was, is not mentioned in scripture: I will not lay much stress upon it; however, I cannot but observe, that it is represented by a diminutive expression, as it is said, *they came to a certain water*, that is, probably, a brook, which was by the way-side; not a river, or a great collection of water. And it is further observed, that Philip, as well as the Eunuch, *went down into the water*; though none suppose that he was plunged in the water; therefore it does not certainly appear, from the sense of the word, that the Eunuch was, unless the matter in controversy be taken for granted, that baptism can be performed in no other way, but by plunging.

Moreover, *to go down to the water*, does not always signify in other scriptures, going down to the bottom of the water; as when the Psalmist, in Psal. cvii. 23. speaks of them that *go down to the sea in ships*, he does not mean them that go down to the bottom of it; therefore, going down to the water does not always

\* 'Ex.

† If any one has a mind to see how these particles *in* and *ex*, are used in the New Testament, he may consult Schmid. concord. in voc. *in* and *ex*, where there are a great number of places mentioned, in which these words are used; and, it will hardly be thought, by any impartial reader, that the greatest part of them can be rendered by, *into* or *out of*; but rather *to*, or *from*.



signify being plunged in it. As for what is said concerning Philip and the eunuch's *coming up out of the water*, it may very fairly be understood of their returning from the water-side, and the eunuch's going up again into his chariot. Moreover, I cannot but think, that in this, and all other places, where persons are said to *come up out of the water*, it denotes an action performed with design, and the perfect exercise of the understanding in him that does it; which seems not agreeable to one who is at the bottom of the water, and cannot well come up from thence, unless by the help of him that baptized him. The sense of the words, *coming out of the water*, is agreeable to what is said concerning our Saviour at his baptism, in Matt. iii. 16. *Jesus went up straightway out of the water*; which seems to be a mistake in our translation; where the words *αὐτὸς ἦν ἀναγινόμενος*, have been rendered, *from the water*; which is of the same import with the sense of the Greek particle *ἐκ*, when a person is said to *come up out of the water*.

*Obj. 3.* It seems very evident, that John the Baptist used no other mode but that of immersion; because he chose those places to exercise this part of his ministry in, that were well supplied with water, sufficient for this purpose. Accordingly, we first read of his removing from the *wilderness of Judea*, in which he *preached the doctrine of repentance*; and told the people, that *the kingdom of heaven*, that is, the gospel-state, which was to begin with the appearing of the Messiah, *was at hand*; and then we read of his removing to the banks of the river Jordan, for the conveniency of baptizing those who came to him for that purpose: And, after that, we read of another station in which he resided, *viz. Enon, near to Salim*; and this reason is assigned; *because there was much water there*, John iii. 23. Now, if he had baptized by sprinkling, or pouring a little water on the face, he had no need to remove out of the *wilderness of Judea*: For, whatever scarcity of water there might be there, it was no difficult matter for him to be supplied with enough to serve his occasion, had this been his mode of baptizing.

*Answer.* To this it may be replied, that though John removed to Jordan and Enon, that he might be well supplied with water, as he daily wanted large quantities thereof; yet it doth not necessarily follow from hence, that this was done for the sake of immersion therein: And it doth not sufficiently appear to me, that Enon afforded water deep enough for a person to be baptized in it after this manner; for it seems to be but a small tract of land, in which it is hardly probable, that there were many lakes, or rivers of water contained; which is as much as can be said concerning a well watered country.

Therefore, I think, the words \* ought to have been rendered *many waters*; by which we are to understand, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, that it was a place of springs †, or small brooks of water. This place John chose, that he might be supplied with water for his use; but it doth not, I think, necessarily, follow from hence, that he baptized by immersion; Besides, if there had been a great collection of waters there, there would have been some indications thereof at this day; which, I believe, it would be hard to prove that there are.

As to the other part of the objection, that it was a very easy matter for him to have been supplied with water in the wilderness of Judea, to baptize by sprinkling or pouring, by his having it brought to him in vessels for that purpose: It may be replied, that if he had only poured water on the head or face, there is no need to suppose that he was so sparing of it, as not to use above a spoonful, especially when it was so easy a matter for him, by his removing to another station, to be better supplied. If there was but a little water poured on every one that came to be baptized by him, it would require a very great quantity of water to baptize the vast multitudes that came to him; inasmuch as it is said, that *Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, were baptized of him*: It is one thing for a little water to be brought in a bason to baptize a person or two, and another thing for this to be done in the case under our present consideration. Moreover, it is certain, that in hot countries, and particularly in Judea; and more especially in the wilderness thereof, there was a very great scarcity of water; accordingly we read, sometimes, that water was so valuable a thing, that it was reckoned a very considerable part of a man's estate: Thus Isaac was envied by the Philistines, for all the wells his father's servants had digged; and then we read of their stopping them up, and his digging other wells; and also of the strife between the herdsmen of Gerar, and his herdsmen, for the possession thereof, Gen. xxvi. 14,—20. And we read, in Gen. xxi. 14,—16. that when Abraham sent Hagar away from him with Ishmael, he gave her *bread*, and a *bottle of water*; and *when the water was spent in the bottle, she cast the child under one of the shrubs*, despairing of his life; which she need not have done, if water was so easy to come by as it is supposed in this objection. It is certain, that a person may travel many miles without finding water to quench his thirst, in those desert places. This farther appears from Samson's being *ready to die for thirst*, after the great victory he had obtained over the Philistines, on which occasion God wrought a miracle to supply him, Judges xv. 18, 19, which can hardly be account-

\* Τὸ αὐτὸ πρὸς τὸν Ἰωάννην.

† See Lightfoot's works, Vol. I. Page 500.

ed for, if there had been so great plenty of water in that country, as there is in ours; this then, I apprehend to be the reason of John's removal to Jordan and Ænon; therefore it doth not necessarily prove that his design was to baptize in that way that is pleaded for by those on the other side of the question.

Moreover, as it doth not sufficiently appear to me, from any thing contained in the objection, that John used immersion in baptism, so it seems most agreeable, to some circumstances that attended it, to conclude that he did not; inasmuch as there was no conveniency for the change of their garments, nor servants appointed to help them therein; which seems necessary to answer this occasion. And some have supposed, that it might endanger the health of those who were infirm among them, and John's much more, who was obliged to stand many days together in the water, or, at least, the greatest part thereof, while he was administering this ordinance. And they who were baptized must immediately retire when the ordinance was over, or it would endanger their health; unless we have recourse to a dispensation of providence, that is next to miraculous: Though I am sensible, some say, that none ever suffered hereby in our day; which, if the observation be true, is a kind providence that they ought to be thankful for.

But if, after all that has been said on this matter, it will not be allowed that baptism signifies any thing else but dipping in water: Then I might farther allege, that this might be done by dipping the face, which is the principal part of the body, without plunging the whole body; and this might answer the design of the ordinance as well as the other; since it is not the quantity used in a sacramental sign that is so much to be regarded, as the action performed, together with the matter of it; if the smallest piece of bread, and a spoonful of wine are used in the Lord's supper, this is generally reckoned as well adapted to answer the design of the ordinance, as if a great quantity of each were received by every one that partakes of it. Now, as to what concerns our present argument, the washing a part of the body is deemed sufficient to signify the thing intended, as much as though the whole body had been washed. Thus when our Saviour washed his disciples' feet, and told Peter, *If he washed him not, he had no part in him*, John xiii. 5. wherein (by the way) we may observe, that he calls washing his feet, washing him, by a synecdoche, for a part of the whole; upon which occasion Peter replies, *not my feet only, but also my hands and my head*; and Jesus answered, *He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit*, ver. 10. by which, I think, he intends, that this signifies that cleansing, which is the spiritual meaning thereof, as much as though the whole body had been washed with water; for though one de-

sign hereof might be to teach them humility, and brotherly kindness; yet it also signifies their being washed or cleased by his blood and Spirit.

*Obj: 4.* There is another objection on which very much stress is generally laid, which I should not do justice to the cause I am maintaining, if I should wholly pass it over, taken from what the apostle says, in Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5. *so many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death: Therefore we were buried with him by baptism (a) into death;*

(a) In Col. ii. 12. and context, is a succession of figures, designed, in different ways, to illustrate and enforce the same fact. Verse 11. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision, *made without hands*, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." That is, in putting off the old man, you are circumcised without hands; the work is effected by the Holy Spirit.—You are born again, which is spiritual circumcision. "Circumcision is that of the *heart*." This renewing of the Holy Spirit consists in putting off the body of sin, in renouncing sin, and reforming the life. Or, we are "buried with him in baptism." As the burial of Jesus Christ gave evidence, that he had really died, the just for the unjust; that he had yielded himself a sacrifice for sin; so we in our spiritual circumcision or baptism, the figure now used, show ourselves to be really dead to sin, crucified in the lusts of our minds. As Christ, when buried, was dead and separated from the world; so in regeneration we become separate from sin. We are new creatures, having put off the old man. We are buried from the wicked indulgences and pursuits of the world.

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, are, not only causes, but types and symbols to represent the death of our sins, our putting off the old man, and becoming new creatures.

No reference is made in the text to the water of baptism, any more than to the knife of circumcision in the preceding verse. The writer is speaking of that baptism, and of that alone, in which we "are risen with Christ, through the faith, which is the operation of God." This certainly can be nothing less than *spiritual* baptism, or regeneration; for the most violent advocate for dipping, or plunging, or burying, will not pretend, that this, necessarily, is connected with "faith;" he will allow it may be *possible* for a man to be plunged and buried in *water*, and yet not have "the faith, which is the operation of God." If he allow this, and allow this he must and will, then our text is no support of his cause. It cannot be water baptism which is mentioned.

Were not this the fact, nothing could be inferred respecting the *mode* of baptism. It would then only signify that, as Christ was buried and separated from the world; so we in baptism are buried and separated from a world of sin. The zeal for the literal construction of this figure may, perhaps, be extinguished by indulging it in other instances. St. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ." Would any person suppose from this, that he had been led to Calvary, nailed to the cross, and pierced by the soldier's spear? Christians are said to be "circumcised in Christ." Does any one infer from this that all christians experience the bloody rite of the Jews? Or, because Christians "are partakers of Christ's sufferings," are all christians, therefore, betrayed by Judas, spit upon, buffeted, and crowned with thorns? Or, because St. Paul says the Philippians were his "*crown*," were they, therefore, formed into a crown of honor, and worn as a badge of future glory? Or, because the sacrament represents the sufferings and death of Christ, are all worthy communicants crucified? Were our baptist brethren consistent with themselves, such would be their explanation of these passages of scripture.

It immediately follows our text; "wherein also you were risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

*that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For*

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Wherein, or in which baptism "we are risen," actually "risen with Christ by the faith" which God gives to the new creature. You, who have this spiritual baptism, rise like Christ above the selfish motives, and sensual pursuits of a fallen world. You seek the kingdom of God; you aspire after divine good:

Persons, born again, like Jesus Christ, separate their hearts from the world, and rise to a divine life. That this is the only true construction of the text, may be inferred from a corresponding passage. Rom. vi. 4. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." By spiritual baptism we partake the privileges of Christ's death. By dying to sin ourselves, as we do in the new birth, we resemble Jesus Christ in his death, who died "to make an end of sin." As Christ was raised from the grave; so we, not in water baptism, but in regeneration or spiritual baptism, are "raised" to walk in newness of life. Old things are done away; *all* things are become new. If we have experienced this spiritual baptism, we shall have the Spirit of Christ. We shall be separate from the world of sin, as Christ was in the grave, and we shall like him rise to a holy, a new life. We obey a new master, seek a new way of salvation, act from new motives, to accomplish new designs; we choose new companions, experience new sorrows, and new joys. As if buried, we are separate from our former lives.

St. John says, "He [Christ] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." The Selucians and Hermians understood this literally, and maintained that material fire was necessary in the administration of baptism. Valentinus, like our baptists, rebaptized those, who had received baptism out of the sect, and *drew them through the fire*. Herculian, cited by Clemens Alexandrinus, says that some applied a red hot iron to the ears of the baptized. St. Paul says, we are buried with Christ in baptism. This also has been understood literally; but such persons forget that to be consistent, on their plan, they should continue "buried" three days and three nights, the time Christ lay in the earth. Should any object that this would drown them, the baptist, in his way of treating figures, would have an easy answer, and readily prove that drowning was the very design of baptism. Rom. vi. 4. "We are buried with him by baptism into his death." We are not merely buried, for this is only a part, any more than sprinkling; but we are buried to death, "buried into his death." Thus he has scripture for drowning all whom he baptizes, and precisely as much scripture for drowning, as for burying. The very same passage, might he say, which commands burying, commands drowning, commands "death."

In the present mode of plunging, the resemblance is almost entirely lost. What is the difference between laying a dead body in a rock, covering it with a great stone; sealing it in a solemn manner; *all* things continuing in this state, three days and three nights, what is the resemblance between this, and suddenly plunging a living body into water, and instantly lifting it out of the water? What possible likeness is there between a *living person* in the water, and a *dead body* in a rock? The similitude is little better than that of the blind man, who supposed the light of the sun was like the noise of a cannon. We have accordingly endeavoured to show in the introduction, that the elegant scholar, the christian orator of Tarsus, had no thought of any such resemblance; his object was to show, that in regeneration or spiritual baptism, which is followed "with newness of life," or, a new life, "through faith which is the operation of God," we are dead and buried to sin, and raised or made alive to God, as Christ was. The evident design of the text is to illustrate the preceding verse, which speaks of spiritual circumcision made without hands. This *baptism* is that by which we are *raised with Christ*; but in water baptism we are not always raised with Christ. If men are plunged they may generally be raised from the water; but this has no necessary connexion with "rising with Christ." This baptism

*if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.* From whence it is argued, that there ought to be a similitude between the sign and the thing signified; and, consequently, that baptism should be performed in such a way, that, by being covered with water, there might be a resemblance of Christ's burial; and by being lifted up out of the water, a resemblance of his resurrection: Therefore this ordinance doth not only signify the using the means of cleansing with water, but the mode, namely, being plunged, or, as it were, buried in water.

*Answ.* To this it may be replied, that it is not agreeable to the nature of a sacramental sign, in any other instance; that there should be an analogy between the thing done, and what is signified thereby, any otherwise than by divine appointment. Accordingly we observed, in the foregoing answer, that a sacrament has not a natural tendency to signify Christ, and his benefits; as the eating bread and drinking wine doth not signify the body and blood of Christ, any otherwise than as this signification is annexed by our Saviour, to the action performed; the same, I think, may be applied to baptism; especially our consecration, and dedication to God therein; and if any other external sign had been instituted, to signify the blessings of the covenant of grace, we should have been as much obliged to make use of it as we were of water. Therefore, I conceive, the apostle, in this scripture, mentioned in the objection, doth not refer to our being buried in water, or taken out of it, as a natural sign of Christ's burial and resurrection; but our having communion with him in his burial and resurrection. This, I think, would hardly be denied by many, on the other side of the question, did not the objection, but now mentioned, and the cause they maintain, render it expedient for them to understand the words in another sense. This is all that I shall say with respect to this matter in controversy, as to the subjects and mode of baptism; in which, as I should have been unfaithful, had I said less to it; so I have not the least inclination to treat those that differ from me in an unfriendly way, as having a just sense of their harmony with us, especially a great part of them, in those doctrines that have a more immediate reference to our salvation.

We shall now proceed to consider, that as there are some

is also effected "through faith which is the operation of God;" but a man may be raised out of an ocean of water, every day of his life, and remain destitute of faith; therefore, the text has no reference to water baptism.

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who appear to be grossly ignorant of the thing signified in baptism, who seem to engage in it, as though it were not a divine institution, concluding it to be little more than an external rite or form to be used in giving the child a name, being induced hereto rather by custom, than a sense of the obligation they are under, to give up their children to God by faith therein; so there are others who attribute too much to it, when they assert, that infants are hereby regenerated; and that if they die before they commit actual sin, they are undoubtedly saved, inasmuch as they are hereby made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven: This seems to be an ascribing that to the ordinance, which is rather expected or desired, than conferred thereby.

As for the child's being signed with the sign of the cross, signifying hereby that he should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil; how much soever this may be a branch of that baptismal obligation, which he is professedly under; yet I cannot see what warrant persons have to make use of this external sign and symbol, which can be reckoned no other than an ordinance for their faith, though destitute of a divine institution.

There is also another thing practised by some in baptism, that is greatly abused, namely, the requiring that some should be appointed as sureties for the child, by whom it is personated; and they engage, in a solemn manner, in its behalf, that it shall fulfil the obligation that it is laid under, which is not only more than what is in their power to perform; but it is to be feared, that the greatest part of these sureties hardly think themselves obliged to shew any concern about them afterward. And that which is farther exceptionable in this matter, is that the parents, who are more immediately obliged to give up their children to God, seem to be, as it were, excluded from having any hand in this matter.

I have nothing to except against the first rise of this practice; which was in the second century, when the church was under persecution; and the design thereof was laudable and good, namely, that if the parents should die before the child came of age; whereby it would be in danger of being seized on by the Heathen, and trained up in their superstitious and idolatrous mode of worship, the sureties promised, that, in this case, they would deal with it as though it were their own child, and bring it up in the Christian religion; which kind and pious concern for its welfare, might have been better expressed at some other time than in baptism, lest this should be thought an appendix to that ordinance: However, through the goodness of God, the children of believing parents are not

reduced to those hazardous circumstances; and therefore the obligation to do this, is less needful; but to vow, and not perform, is not only useless to the child, but renders that only a matter of form, which they promise to do in this sacred ordinance.

The only thing that I shall add under this answer, is, that if we have been baptized, either in our infancy, or when adult, we are obliged, in faithfulness, as we value our own souls, to improve it to the glory of God, and our spiritual welfare in the whole conduct of our lives. And this leads us to what is contained in the following answer.

**QUEST. CLXVII.** *How is baptism to be improved by us?*

**ANSW.** The needful, but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long; especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others, by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein, by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to the grace of baptism and our engagements, by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament, by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace, and by endeavouring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ, and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit, into one body.

**I**N this answer we may observe,

**I.** That our baptism, together with the engagements which we are therein laid under to be the Lord's, is to be improved by us; though this duty be too much neglected. That it ought to be improved is evident, inasmuch as it is an ordinance, or means of grace, for our attaining spiritual blessings; therefore we are not only guilty of a sinful neglect, but we lose the advantage that might be expected thereby, if we do not improve it so as to answer the valuable end thereof; and when we consider it as a professed dedication to God, as has been before observed, or a bond and obligation laid on us, to be entirely, and for ever, his, it cannot but be reckoned the highest affront offered to the divine Majesty, and a being unstedfast in his co-

venant, for us practically to disown the engagement, or, in effect, to deny his right to us. Now, it is farther observed, that this duty is much neglected, and the reason hereof is,

1. Because many have very low thoughts of this ordinance, and understand not the spiritual intent or meaning thereof, nor what it is to improve it. These reckon it no more than an external rite, established by custom, and commonly observed in a Christian nation, without duly weighing the end and design for which it was instituted, or what is signified thereby.

2. Others suppose, that there is nothing in it but a public declaration, that the person baptized is made a Christian, or has that character put upon him; but they know not what it is to be a Christian indeed, being utter strangers to the life and power of religion, and the spiritual blessings hoped for, or, through the grace of God, consequent upon our baptismal dedication.

3. Others have, indeed, right apprehensions of the sign and the thing signified thereby, yet through the prevalency of corruption, and the pride and deceitfulness of their hearts, they do not fiducially give up themselves to God, nor desire the spiritual and saving blessings of the covenant of grace. These therefore do not improve their baptism; and, it is to be feared, that this is the condition and character of the greatest number of professors: Which leads us to consider,

II. How baptism is to be improved by us, and that in several cases,

1. When we are present, at the administration of it to others. We are not, indeed, at that time, so immediately concerned in the ordinance, as the person who is publicly devoted to God therein. Nevertheless, we are not to behave ourselves as unconcerned spectators; and therefore,

(1.) We are to join herein with suitable acts of faith and prayer, as the nature of the ordinance calls for them, and to adore the persons of the Godhead whose name and glory is mentioned therein. And we are to apply ourselves to God, for the grace of the covenant, that is signified thereby, that he would be our God, as well as the God of the person who is particularly given up to him in baptism. We are also to bewail the universal depravity of human nature, and that guilt which we bring with us into the world, which is signified in infant-baptism; and this, together with the habits of sin, which we have contracted, is confessed by those who are baptized when adult, which we cannot but see a great deal of, in our daily experience. We ought also to entertain becoming thoughts of the virtue of the blood of Christ, and of the power of the Holy Ghost, which alone can take away the guilt of sin, and render this ordinance effectual to salvation; which we

are not only to desire with respect to the person baptized, but that we ourselves may be made partakers of that grace, which we equally stand in need of.

(2.) We ought to confess before God, with sorrow and shame, how defective we have been, as to the improvement of our baptismal engagements; so that, though we have been devoted to him, our hearts and affections have been very prone to depart from him; and we ought to adore and acknowledge the goodness and faithfulness of God, in that, though we have been unstedfast in his covenant, through the treachery and deceitfulness of our hearts; yet he has been ever mindful thereof, and made good the promises contained therein, to all his servants who have put their trust in him.

2. Our baptism is to be improved by us in the time of temptation, in order to our resisting it, and preventing our being entangled and overcome thereby.

(1.) If the temptation takes its rise from the world, or we are thereby induced to lay aside, or be remiss in our duty to God, from the prosperous circumstances in which we are therein, we should consider, that in having been devoted to God in our infancy, or given up ourselves professedly to him, when adult, it has been intimated and acknowledged, that he is our portion, better to us than all we can enjoy in the world; and therefore we ought to acquiesce in him as such, and say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none, or nothing, upon the earth that I desire besides thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 25.

Moreover, if we are tempted to be uneasy, and repine at the providence of God, by reason of the many evils that befall us in the world, we ought to consider, that when we were given up to God, this implied in it an obligation to be content to be at his disposal, and to be satisfied with whatever he allots for us, as not questioning the care and justice of his providence, in which we were under an indispensable obligation to acquiesce. Therefore when God tries us, by bringing us under various afflictions, our baptismal engagement obliges us to say, *It is the Lord, let him do with us what seemeth good in his sight*.

(2.) If we are exposed to the temptations of Satan, or those inward suggestions, whereby sinful objects are presented to our thoughts, and a false gloss put upon them, to induce us to a compliance therewith, we are to improve our baptismal engagement, by considering that it contains a solemn acknowledgment of God's right to us, exclusive of all others: therefore, we cannot but dread the thoughts of submitting to be vassals to Satan, which is, in effect, to disown that allegiance which we owe to God, and to say, that other lords shall have dominion over us. This will have a tendency to induce us to ad-

here stedfastly to God, as the result of our having been devoted to him in this ordinance.

And if we are afraid of being ensnared by those wiles and methods of deceit, which Satan often makes use of, that are not always discerned by us, we are to consider ourselves as having been devoted to Christ; and, pursuant thereunto, if we have, in any instance, improved this solemn transaction, we have given up ourselves to him, in hope of being under his protection, and interested in his intercession, so that though we are *sifted as wheat*, our *faith may not fail*, Luke xxii. 31, 32.

Moreover, when we are assaulted, and, as it were, wounded with Satan's fiery darts, whereby great discouragements are thrown in our way, the guilt of sin magnified, as though it were unpardonable, and the stain and pollution thereof such, as can never be washed away: And when we are ready to conclude from hence, that our state is hopeless, and the comforts we once enjoyed, irrecoverably lost; this is, indeed, an afflictive case. Nevertheless, our baptism is to be improved by us, as considering that remission of sins was the blessing desired and hoped for, inasmuch as it was signified thereby; so that we are to be sensible that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and that, as we were given up to him, in hope of obtaining this privilege, and have been enabled since then, to give up ourselves to him by faith, and therein to improve our baptismal engagement; we therefore trust, that he will appear for us, rebuke the adversary, establish our comforts, and enable us to walk as those, who desire to recommend his grace to others, that they may be encouraged to adhere to him, by the comfortable sense which we have of his love shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost.

3. Our baptismal engagement is to be improved by us, before and after we are brought into a converted state.

(1.) Unregenerate persons are to improve it, as it should afford them matter of deep humiliation, that though they have been devoted to God, and thereby were called by his name, and made partakers of the external blessings of his covenant; yet they have been alienated from the life of God, and strangers to the internal saving blessings thereof. There was a profession made, in baptism, that they stood in need of Christ's mediation, to deliver them from the guilt of sin, and of being cleansed from the pollution thereof, which is of a spreading nature; but they have, notwithstanding, given way to it; and, how *pure* soever they have been *in their own eyes*, are *not yet washed from their filthiness*, Prov. xxx. 12. Now such may take occasion from hence to plead earnestly with God for converting grace; which is the only means whereby they may know that he has accepted of their solemn dedication to him;

or that they are not only born of water, but of the Spirit; and are made partakers of the thing signified in baptism, without which, the external sign will not afford any saving advantage. We may also plead with God, that as we are professedly his, he would assert his own right to us, overcome us to himself, and make us *willing in the day of his power*; Psal. cx. 3.

(2.) Our baptismal engagement is constantly to be improved by us, if we are brought into a state of grace, in order to the growth and increase thereof; especially if we are sensible of great declension therein, or that it is not, in all respects with us, as it once was; if we are sensible of deadness and stupidity, in holy duties, and stand in need of being quickened, excited, and brought into a lively frame of spirit, or to be restored after great back-slidings; if we would have sin mortified, and the secret workings thereof in our heart subdued, we ought to consider, that having been *baptized into Jesus Christ*; we were *baptized into his death*; and that we are obliged hereby to *walk in newness of life*; therefore *sin should not reign in our mortal bodies*, Rom. vi. 3, 4, 12. And as we hope and trust, that we are made partakers of the saving blessings signified in this ordinance, we desire to improve the relation we stand in to Christ, as his people, as a matter of encouragement, that when we are oppressed, he will undertake for us.

If we are destitute of assurance of his love, and our interest in him, we are to improve the consideration of our being his, not only by professed dedication, but by a fiducial adherence to him; this will encourage us to hope that he will enable us to walk holily and comfortably before him, and lift up the light of his countenance upon us, as our reconciled God and Father.

And, in the whole course of our conversation it will be of use, for the promoting the life of faith, which consists in an entire dependance on him, as those who are sensible that we can do nothing without him, to consider, that when we were first devoted to him, it was acknowledged, and from the time, wherein we have been enabled to give up ourselves to him by faith, we have been always sensible that we stand in need of daily supplies of grace from him, as all our springs are in him. Moreover, our baptismal engagement is to be improved, as it is an inducement to us to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness; whereby practical religion will be promoted in all its branches, when we consider that we are not our own, and therefore dare not think of living as we list, or serving divers lusts and pleasures, but that we are obliged to make his revealed will (whose we are, and whom we desire to serve,) the rule of all our actions.

And lastly, we ought to walk in brotherly love, as being *baptized by the Spirit into one body*, 1 Cor. xii. 13. They who are



partakers of the saving blessings signified by baptism, have ground to conclude themselves members of Christ's mystical body, or the invisible church, of which he is the head. This is a spiritual baptism, being the effect of divine power, and the special work of the Holy Ghost; and certainly this will be an inducement to all who are partakers thereof, to walk together in brotherly love, as those who are favoured with the same privileges, and hope to enjoy that complete blessedness, in which they, who are before devoted to Christ, shall be for ever with him. Thus concerning the ordinance of baptism.

And now we are led to speak concerning the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which is considered either absolutely in itself, or as compared with baptism. And accordingly it is enquired; wherein they agree, or differ. In considering the nature of the Lord's supper, it is farther enquired; how they, who are to partake of it, ought to prepare themselves for it before they engage therein? And there are also two cases of conscience answered; the one respecting those who are not satisfied concerning their meetness for it; the other respecting those who ought to be kept from it. We have also an account of the duties of communicants, while they are engaged in this ordinance; or those that are incumbent on them, after they have attended on it. These things are particularly insisted on in several following answers, which we are now led to consider.

**QUEST. CLXVIII.** *What is the Lord's Supper?*

**ANSW.** The Lord's supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is shewed forth; and they that worthily communicate, feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, have their union and communion with him confirmed, testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body.

**QUEST. CLXIX.** *How hath Christ appointed bread and wine to be given and received in the sacrament of the Lord's supper?*

**ANSW.** Christ hath appointed the ministers of his word, in the administration of this sacrament of the Lord's supper, to set apart the bread and wine from common use, by the word of institution, thanksgiving, and prayer, to take and break the bread, and to give both the bread, and the wine to the com-

municants, who are, by the same appointment, to take, and eat the bread, and to drink the wine, in thankful remembrance, that the body of Christ was broken and given, and his blood shed for them.

**QUEST. CLXX.** *How do they that worthily communicate in the Lord's supper, feed upon the body and blood of Christ therein?*

**ANSW.** As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in, with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to their outward senses; so they that worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporal, or carnal, but in a spiritual manner, yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.

**T**HERE are several things contained in these answers, viz.  
**I.** The general description of this ordinance, as it is called a sacrament of the New Testament; in which we shall be led to speak concerning the person by whom it was instituted in common with other ordinances; and that is our Lord Jesus Christ.

**II.** We shall consider the persons by whom it is to be administered, namely, the ministers, or pastors of particular churches; inasmuch as it is an ordinance given only to those who are in church-communion.

**III.** We have an account of the matter thereof, or the outward elements, to wit, bread and wine.

**IV.** We shall consider the ministers act, antecedent to the church's partaking of this ordinance, in setting apart the elements from a common to a sacred use; which is to be done by the word and prayer, joined with thanksgiving.

**V.** We have an account of the actions, both of the minister and people; the one breaks the bread, and pours out the wine, in order to their being distributed among those who are to receive them; the other, to wit, the communicants, partake of them, and join with him in eating the bread, and drinking the wine.

**VI.** We are to consider what is signified hereby, namely, the body and blood of Christ; which are not supposed to be corporally and carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of the receivers, upon which account they may be said to feed

upon the body and blood of Christ, and apply the benefits of his death to themselves.

VII. We have an account of the persons who hope to enjoy these privileges, and partake of the Lord's supper in a right manner; these are said worthily to communicate; as also the ends which they ought to have in view, namely, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace, their enjoying communion with Christ; and that love that they are obliged to express to each other, as members of the same mystical body.

I. It is an ordinance of the New Testament, instituted by our Saviour. That it is an ordinance, is evident, in that it is founded on a divine command; as appears from the words of institution, in Matt. xxvi. 26, 27. *Take eat, this is my body; and he took the cup, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, &c.* And this is also intimated by the apostle, when, speaking particularly concerning it, as also the manner in which it is to be performed, he says, *I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you*, 1 Cor. xi. 23. Moreover, there is a blessing annexed to our partaking of it in a right manner; which may plainly be inferred from the apostle's distinguishing those who receive it *worthily*, from others that receive it *unworthily*, or in an unbecoming manner; of whom the former are said to *come together for the better*, the latter *for the worse*, ver. 17. and to partake of the Lord's supper for the better, is to partake of it for our spiritual advantage, which supposes, that there are some blessings annexed to it, which render it not only a duty, but an ordinance, or means of grace. And, that it is a gospel-ordinance of the New Testament, appears from the time of its being instituted by our Saviour, as well as the end and design thereof. It is particularly intimated, that Christ instituted this ordinance immediately before his last sufferings, as a memorial of his dying love. Thus the apostle says, *The same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread*, ver. 23. And that it was designed to continue as a standing ordinance in the church throughout all ages, appears from what he farther adds, *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death, till he come*, ver. 26.

The contrary to this is maintained by some modern enthusiasts, who deny it to be an ordinance, as they also do baptism; concluding that no ceremony, or significant sign, is consistent with the gospel-dispensation. And as for what the apostle says concerning our *showing forth the Lord's death till he come*, they suppose, that hereby is meant, till he comes by the effusion of the Spirit; and therefore, if it was an ordinance at first, it ceased to be so when the Spirit was poured forth on

the church, in the beginning of the gospel-dispensation. To this it may be replied,

1. That ceremonial institutions are not inconsistent with the gospel-dispensation, inasmuch as they may not be designed to signify some benefits to be procured by Christ, as they did, which were instituted under the ceremonial law; but they may be considered as rememorative signs of the work of redemption, which has been brought to perfection by him.

2. When the apostle, in the scripture but now mentioned, says, that *we shew the Lord's death till he come*, it cannot be meant concerning his coming in the plentiful effusion of the Spirit; inasmuch as this privilege was conferred on the church in the apostle's days, at the same time, when he speaks of their shewing forth his death. Therefore, doubtless, he intends thereby Christ's second coming, when this, and all other ordinances, which are now observed in the church, as adapted to the present imperfect state thereof, shall cease; we must therefore conclude from hence, that it was designed to be continued in the church in all ages, as it is at this day.

II. We are to consider the persons by whom this ordinance is to be administered; and these are only such as are lawfully called, and set apart to the pastoral office, whose work is to feed the church, not only by the preaching of the word, but by the administration of the sacraments, which are ordinances for their faith, in which they are said to receive, and spiritually feed upon Christ and his benefits; upon which account God promises to *give his people pastors according to his own heart, who should feed them with knowledge and understanding*, Jer. iii. 15. Now that none but these are appointed to administer this ordinance, is evident in that they, who partake of it, are said to have communion with him, and with one another therein, for their mutual edification and spiritual advantage; therefore it doth not belong to mankind in general, but the church in particular. And, to prevent confusion therein, Christ has appointed one, or more proper officers in his churches, to whom the management of this work is committed; who are called hereunto, by the providence of God, and the consent and desire of the church, to whom they are to minister.

III. We are now to consider the matter, or the outward elements to be used in the Lord's supper; and these are bread and wine. Thus it is said, *Jesus took bread*, Matt. xxvi. 26. *and he also took the cup*; which, by a metonymy, is put for the wine: For, our Saviour referring to this action, speaks of his *drinking the fruit of the vine*, ver. 29. As for the bread that is to be used in this ordinance, there was a very warm debate between the Latin and Greek church concerning it; the former, as the Papists do at this day, concluding it absolutely ne-

cessary, that it should be unleavened bread, inasmuch as that kind of bread was used by our Lord, when he first instituted it, which was at the time of the passover, when no leaven was to be found in their houses. And they make it also a significant sign of the sincerity and truth with which the Lord's supper ought to be eaten; for which, they refer to what the apostle says, in 1 Cor. v. 8. *Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* But this seems only to be an allusion to the use of unleavened bread in the passover; which, it may be, might have a typical reference to that sincerity and truth with which all the ordinances of God are to be engaged in; but it does not sufficiently appear that he intends hereby that the bread used in the Lord's supper should be of this kind, or, that it was designed to signify the frame of spirit with which this ordinance is to be celebrated.

On the other hand, the Greek church thought that the bread ought to be leavened, according to our common practice at this day, it being the same that was used at other times. And this seems most eligible, as it puts a just difference between the bread used in the passover, which was a part of the ceremonial law, and a gospel-institution, that is distinct from it. But, I think, there is no need to debate either side of the question with too much warmth, it being a matter of no great importance. As for the wine that is to be used in this ordinance, it is a necessary part thereof; and therefore the Papists are guilty of sacrilege in withholding the cup from the common people\*.

IV. We are now to consider what the minister is to do, antecedent to the church's partaking of the Lord's supper: He is to set apart the outward elements of bread and wine from a common, to this particular holy use. Upon which account it may be said to be *sanctified by the word of God and prayer*, 1 Tim. iv. 5. The words of institution contain an intimation that these elements are to be used in this ordinance, by Christ's appointment; without which, no significant sign could be used in any religious matters. And, as for prayer, this is agreeable to Christ's practice; for, he *took bread and blessed it*, or prayed for a blessing on it; and as the apostle expresses it; this was accompanied with thanksgiving, as he says; *When he had given thanks he brake it*, Matt. xxvi. 26. 1 Cor. xi. 24. which is agreeable to the nature and design of the ordinance, as herein we pray for the best of blessings, and express our thankfulness to him for the benefits of Christ's redemption.

Here I cannot but observe how the Papists pervert this or-

\* This was done by the council at Constance, A. D. 1415. before which time there were, indeed, several disputes about the matter or form of the cup, in which the wine was contained; but it was never taken away from the common people till then.

dinance in the manner of consecrating the bread, which the priest does only by repeating these words in Latin; *This is my body*; and from thence they take occasion to advance the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation; and suppose, that, by these words pronounced, the bread is changed into the body and blood of Christ; which they assert, contrary to all sense and reason, as well as the end and design of the ordinance; and from hence it will follow, that man has a power to make the body and blood of Christ; and another consequence thereof, will be, that the human nature of Christ is omnipresent, which is inconsistent with a finite nature, and those properties that belong to it as such; from whence it is to be concluded, that it is no where else but in heaven; and it involves in it the greatest contradiction to suppose that it is bread, and having all the qualities thereof; and yet our senses must be so far imposed on, as that we must believe that it is not so, but Christ's body. It also supposes, that Christ has as many bodies as there are wafers in the world; which is a monstrous absurdity. It likewise confounds the sign with the thing signified, and is very opposite to the sense of those words of scripture, *This is my body*; which implies no more, than that the bread, which is the same in itself, after the words of consecration, as it was before, is an external symbol of Christ's body, that is, of the sufferings which he endured therein for his people.

V. We are now to consider the actions both of the minister and the church, when engaged in this ordinance, viz. breaking, distributing, eating the bread, pouring forth, and drinking the wine, for the ends appointed by Christ, in instituting this ordinance. Whether our Saviour gave the bread and wine to every one of the disciples in particular, is not sufficiently determined by the words of institution: For, though Matthew and Mark say, *He gave the bread and the cup to the disciples*, Matt. xxvi. 26, 27. and Mark xiv. 22, 23. Yet Luke speaking either concerning the cup used in the passover, or that in the Lord's supper, represents our Saviour as saying to his disciples, *Take this and divide it among yourselves*, Luke xxii. 17. which seems to intimate that he distributed it to one or more of them, to be conveyed to the rest, that they might divide it among themselves; which is agreeable to the practice of several of the reformed churches in our day, and seems most expedient in case the number of the communicants is very great, and the elements cannot be so conveniently given by the pastor into the hand of every one.

Here I may observe how the Papists pervert this part of the Lord's supper; inasmuch as they will not permit the common people to touch the bread with their hands, lest they should defile it; but the priest puts it into their mouths; for which



purpose it is made up into small, round wafers; and the people are ordered to take great care that they do not use their teeth in chewing it; for that would be, as it were, a crucifying Christ afresh, as offering a kind of violence to what they call his body. But these things are so very absurd and unscriptural, that they confute themselves. And their consecrating a wafer to be reserved in a case prepared for that purpose, and set upon the altar in the church, to be worshipped by all that come near it, savours of gross superstition and idolatry.

We may farther observe, that they deny the people the cup in this ordinance, but not the priests; for what reason, it is hard to determine. And, they mix the wine with water; which, though it does not seem to be agreeable to Christ's institution, yet it was often practised by the ancient church, from whence they took it; and their making this a sacramental sign of Christ's divine and human nature, united together in one person, is much more unwarrantable; nor can I approve of what others suppose, *viz.* that it signifies the blood and water that came out of his side when he was pierced on the cross. And, I can hardly think some Protestants altogether free from the charge of superstition, when they so tenaciously adhere to the use of red wine, as bearing some small resemblance to the colour of Christ's blood; for which reason others chuse to bear their testimony against this ungrounded opinion, by the using of white wine, without supposing that any thing is signified by it more than by red; and others chuse to use one sort at one time, and another at another, to signify that this is an indifferent matter; and these, I think, are most in the right.

Moreover, the practice of the Papists, and some others, in receiving the Lord's supper fasting, to the end that the consecrated bread may not be mixed with undigested food, is not only unwarrantable, but superstitious, as well as contrary to what we read concerning our Saviour and his apostles partaking of the Lord's supper in the first institution thereof, immediately after having eaten the passover, and to what the apostle suggests, when he reproves the church at Corinth, for eating and drinking to excess immediately before they partook of the Lord's supper; upon which occasion he advises them to *eat and drink* (though with moderation) *in their own houses*, 1 Cor. xi. 21, 22.

Again, the administering the Lord's supper privately, as the Papists and others do, to sick people, seems to be contrary to the design of its being a church-ordinance; and when, to give countenance to this practice, it is styled, as by the former of these, a viaticum, or means to convey the soul, if it should soon after depart out of the body, to heaven, they are much more remote from our Saviour's design in instituting this or-

dinance ; neither do they rightly understand the sense of the scripture, from whence they infer the necessity thereof, *except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*, John vi. 53. when they apply it to this purpose.

There is another thing that must not be wholly passed over, viz. the various gestures used in receiving the Lord's supper. The Papists not only receive it kneeling ; but, they allege, that they ought to do so, as being obliged to adore the body and blood of Christ, which, as they absurdly suppose, is really present, inasmuch as the bread is transubstantiated, or turned into it. And the Lutherans, with equal absurdity assert, that the body of Christ, is really, though invisibly, present in the bread ; which is what they call consubstantiation. Some other Protestants, indeed, plead for the receiving it kneeling, as supposing Christ to be spiritually, though not corporally, present therein ; and therefore they do not worship the bread and wine, but our Saviour ; which, they suppose, they ought to do with this becoming reverence.

What I would take leave to say, in answer to this, is, that we humbly hope and trust, that Christ, according to his promise, is present with his people in all his ordinances ; yet, it is not supposed that we are obliged to engage in every one of them kneeling. But that which determines the faith and practice of all other reformed churches, who do not use this gesture in the Lord's supper, is, because it is contrary to the example of our Saviour and his apostles, when it was first celebrated ; which ought to be a rule to the churches in all succeeding ages.

If it be said, that this is a gesture most agreeable to prayer, or, at least, that sitting is not so. To this it may be replied, that it is not an ordinance principally or only designed for prayer ; for, whatever prayers we put up to God therein, are short, ejaculatory, and mixed with other meditations, which may be performed with an awful reverence of the divine majesty, such as we ought to have in other acts of religious worship, though we do not use that gesture of kneeling. And besides, we think ourselves obliged to receive the Lord's supper sitting, that being a table gesture in use among us, in like manner as that which our Saviour and his apostles used, was among the eastern nations.

As for the reformed Gallican churches, they receive it for the most part, standing ; which, being a medium between both extremes, they suppose to be most eligible. But this not being a table-gesture, nor, in that respect, conformed to that which was used by our Saviour and his apostles, I cannot think it warrantable. Nevertheless, when the gesture of standing or sitting is made a significant sign as some do the former, of our

being servants, ready to obey the will of Christ our great Lord and Master ; or, as others explain it, as signifying our being travellers to the heavenly country ; and the latter, viz. sitting, of our familiarity, or communion with Christ. These are rather the result of human invention, than founded on a divine institution, since we have not the least account in scripture, of these things being signified thereby. This leads us to consider,

VI. The thing signified in this ordinance, and in what respect Christ is said to be present therein, together with the benefits expected from him, as we are said to feed upon him by faith for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. I cannot but think that the general design hereof, is not much unlike to that which was ordained under the ceremonial law, in which, after the sacrifice was offered, part of it was reserved to be *eaten in the holy place*, Lev. vi. 16. which was a significant feast upon a sacrifice. In like manner, the Lord's supper, which comes in the room of the passover, is ordained to be a feast on Christ's sacrifice ; so the apostle styles it, when he says, *Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us : Therefore let us keep the feast*, &c. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. The fiducial application of Christ, and the benefits of his death, is the principal thing to be considered in this gospel-festival. However, there are some cautions necessary to be observed with respect to the things signified therein, as what may be useful to us that our faith may be exercised in a right manner. Therefore let it be considered,

1. That though the Lord's supper was instituted in commemoration of Christ's love, expressed in his death, which was the last and most bitter part of his sufferings for our redemption. Yet he did not design hereby to exclude his other sufferings in life ; nor, indeed, his whole course of obedience from his incarnation to his death ; since it is very evident that the death of Christ is often considered in scripture, by a synecdoche, as denoting the whole course of obedience, both active and passive, which is the matter of our justification ; and therefore is to be the object on which our faith is to be conversant in the Lord's supper, as well as his sufferings in, or immediately before his death.

2. When Christ's sufferings upon the cross are said to be signified by the bread and wine ; we are not to conclude that these sufferings are to be so distinctly or separately considered, as that the bread broken, is designed to signify the pains that he endured upon the cross, when his body was as it were broken, its tendons, nerves, and fibres snapped asunder, and his joints dislocated, by being stretched thereon ; and the wine poured forth, to signify the shedding his blood when his hands

and feet were pierced with the nails, and his side with the spear, as some suppose ; since all these things are to be made the subjects of our affectionate meditation in every part of this ordinance, while we are taken up with the contemplation of his last sufferings. And this seems to give countenance to the practice of many of the reformed churches, in consecrating and distributing the bread and wine together ; though it is true, many think, on the other hand, that the elements are to be separately consecrated, as well as distributed, it being most agreeable to what is said concerning Christ's blessing the bread, and giving it to his disciples, and afterwards taking the cup, and giving it to them, Matt. xxvi. 26, 27. However, if this be allowed of, it is not necessary for us to infer from hence, that each of these elements are designed to signify some distinct parts of Christ's sufferings on the cross, but only that the ordinance is to be still continued, the whole including in it two external and visible signs to be used, each of which signify the means whereby he procured our redemption ; and, indeed, when the wine is poured forth, and set apart for another part of this ordinance, we are not so much to enter on a new subject in our meditation, though the sign be different from that of the bread, as to proceed in thinking on, and improving the love of Christ, in his *humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, Phil. ii. 8. and all this is signified by this sign, as well as the other, neither of which are adapted to this end, otherwise than by divine appointment.

3. We must take heed that we do not make more significant signs in the bread and wine than Christ has done ; as some suppose, that almost every ingredient or action used in making them, is to be applied to signify some things that he has done or suffered for our redemption. It is a very great liberty that some take in expatiating on this subject, and applying it to this ordinance. We have a specimen hereof contained in an hymn, composed to be sung as a thanksgiving after the receiving the Lord's supper \* ; in which the corn, as first living and growing, and afterwards cut down, and by threshing, separated from the husk, and then ground in the mill, and baked in the oven, are all made significant signs of the sufferings and torments which our Saviour endured. And the corn being united in one loaf, is made a sign of the union between Christ and his church. In like manner the grapes being gathered, pressed, and made into wine, is supposed to signify our spiritual joy, arising from Christ's shedding his blood. And, as many grapes make one vine, so believers should be united by faith and love. What lengths is it possible for the wit and fancy of

\* This hymn is inserted after Sternhold and Hopkin's version of the Psalms.

men to run, when they have a fruitful invention, and are disposed to make significant signs, and apply them to this ordinance without a divine warrant !

4. When we meditate on Christ's sufferings, our faith is not to rest in, or principally be fixed on the grievousness of them, as Dr. Goodwin observes \* ; so that we should only endeavour hereby to have our hearts moved to a relenting, and compassion expressed towards him, and indignation against the Jews that crucified him, together with an admiring of his noble and heroical love herein ; so that if persons can get their hearts thus affected, they judge and account this to be grace ; whereas, it is no more than what the like tragical story of some great and noble personage (full of heroical virtues and ingenuity ; yet inhumanly and ungratefully used) doth ordinarily work in ingenuous spirits, who read or hear of it ; which, when it reacheth no higher, it is so far from being faith, that it is but a carnal and fleshly devotion ; and Christ himself, at his suffering, found fault with, as not being spiritual, when he says, *Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children*, Luke xxiii. 28. that is, not so much for this, when you see me thus unworthily handled by those for whom I die, as for yourselves.

Moreover, he farther adds, that it was not the malice of the Jews, the falseness of Judas, the fearfulness of Pilate, the iniquity of the times he fell into, that wrought our Saviour's death ; God the Father had an higher design herein : And this our faith is constantly to be conversant about, considering it as the result of an eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, and of that covenant which he came into the world to fulfil ; and his being made sin for us, to take away our sins by the atonement which he made hereby. And, besides this, we may add, that the highest and most affecting consideration in Christ's sufferings, ought to contain in it the idea of his being a divine person, which is the only thing that argued them sufficient to answer the great ends designed thereby, as it rendered them of infinite value ; and it was upon this account that his condescension expressed herein, might truly be said to be infinite. These things, I say, we are principally to rest in, when we meditate on Christ's sufferings in this ordinance ; though the other, which are exceedingly moving and affecting in their kind, are not to be passed over ; since the Holy Ghost has, for this end, given a particular account thereof in the gospels, not barely as an historical relation of what was done to him, but as a convincing evidence of the greatness of his love to us.

\* See Dr. Goodwin's *Christ set forth*, § 2. Chap. ii.

Thus concerning Christ's death, shewed forth or signified in this ordinance. We are farther, under this head, to consider how he is present, and they who engage in it aright feed on his body and blood by faith. We are not to suppose that Christ is present in a corporal way, so that we should be said to partake of his body in a literal sense; but he being a divine person, and consequently omnipresent; and having promised his presence with his church in all ages, and places, when met together in his name; in this respect he is present with them, in like manner as he is in other ordinances, to supply their wants, hear their prayers, and strengthen them against corruption and temptation, and remove their guilt by the application of his blood, which is presented as an object for their contemplation in a more peculiar manner in this ordinance.

As for our feeding on, or being nourished by the body and blood of Christ, these are metaphorical expressions, taken from, and adapted to the nature and quality of the bread and wine by which it is signified; but that which we are to understand hereby, is, our graces being farther strengthened and established, and we enabled to exercise them with greater vigour and delight; and this derived from Christ, and particularly founded on his death. And, when we are said to feed upon him, in order hereunto, it denotes the application of what he has done and suffered, to ourselves; and, in order hereunto, we are to bring our sins, with all the guilt that attends them, as it were, to the foot of the cross of Christ, confess and humble our souls for them before him, and by faith plead the virtue of his death, in order to our obtaining forgiveness, and, at the same time, renew our dedication to him, while hoping and praying for the blessings and privileges of the covenant of grace, which were purchased by him.

Moreover, there is another thing signified in this ordinance, as a farther end for which it was instituted, namely, in that we are to have communion with one another, and thereby express our mutual love, as members of Christ's mystical body, who have the same end in view, and make use of the same means, viz. Christ crucified, as we attend on the same ordinance in which this is set forth, and having the same common necessities, infirmities and corruptions, and the same encouragements for our faith. Therefore we ought to sympathize with one another, and, by faith and prayer, be helpful to them, with whom we join in this ordinance, while we are representing our own case in common with theirs, before the Lord. This leads us to consider,

VII. What ought to be the qualifications of those who have a right to, and are obliged to partake of the Lord's supper: These are expressed in general terms by the apostle, by dis-



*cerning the Lord's body*, 1 Cor. xi. 29. Now this a person cannot do, who is ignorant of the design of his death; therefore there must be some degree of knowledge in those who are qualified for this ordinance. There must also be an afflictive sense of the weight and burden of the guilt of those sins which are daily committed by us, and an apprehension arising from thence, of our need of the merits of Christ, to take them away, and that his death is designed to answer this end. And, that this may be done for our real advantage, as we are said to feed on Christ by faith; it is supposed, that this grace is wrought in us, or, that we are effectually called out of a state of unregeneracy, to partake of gracious communion with Christ; whereby we may be said to be fitted to have fellowship with him in this ordinance, and so partake of it in a right manner, for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

**QUEST. CLXXI.** *How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, to prepare themselves before they come unto it?*

**ANSW.** They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves, of their being in Christ, of their sins, and wants, of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance, love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong, of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

**T**HE Lord's supper being a sacred and solemn ordinance, it ought not to be engaged in without due preparation before-hand, in those who partake of it. The duties mentioned in this answer, which are preparatory for it, are self-examination, the renewing the exercise of those graces which are necessary to our partaking of it aright, serious meditation on the work we are going about, and fervent prayer for the presence and blessing of God therein.

I. Concerning the duty of self-examination; in order hereunto, we must retire from the hurries and incumbrances of the world, that our minds may be disengaged from them, and not filled with distracting thoughts, which will be an hindrance to us in our enquiries into the state of our souls. We must also resolve to deal impartially with ourselves, and consider what really makes against us, as matter of sorrow, shame, and humiliation, as well as those things that are encouraging, and

occasions of thanksgiving to God. We must also endeavour to be acquainted with the word of God, to which our actions and behaviour are to be applied; whereby we are to determine the goodness or badness of our state in general, or the frame of spirit in which we are, in particular.

Now there are several things, concerning which we are to examine ourselves before we come to the Lord's supper.

1. Whether we are in Christ or no? since persons must be first in him before they can have spiritual communion with him. There are some things, which, if we find in ourselves, would give us ground to determine that we are not in Christ; particularly,

That man is not in Christ who is an utter stranger to his person, natures, offices, and the design of his coming into the world; together with the spiritual benefits purchased by his death. Neither is he in Christ, who never saw his need of him, or that there is no hope of salvation without him. Again, he is not in Christ, who obstinately refuses to submit to his government, lives in a wilful contempt of his laws, resolutely persists in the commission of known sins, or in the total neglect of known duties. Again, he is not in Christ, who is ashamed of his doctrine, his gospel, his cross, which a true believer counts his glory; as the apostle says, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ*, Gal. vi. 14. He must also be reckoned out of Christ, who is stupid and presumptuous; and, though, probably, he may hope to be saved by him, yet desires not to have communion with him, but expects to be made partaker of his benefits without faith; or if he pretends to have faith, it is only an assent to some truths, without being accompanied with repentance, and other graces which are inseparably connected with that faith which is saving.

But, on the other hand, we may know that we are in Christ, if we can truly say,

(1.) That we have received a new nature from him, from whence proceed renewed actions, which discover themselves in the whole course of our lives; *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17.

(2.) We must enquire, whether we endeavour constantly to adhere to his revealed will, not barely as the result of some sudden conviction; but as making it the main business of life, to approve ourselves to him in well doing, as our Saviour says, *If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed*, John viii. 31.

(3.) Converse with Christ in ordinance, is another evidence of our being in him: For, as a man is said to be known by the

company he keeps, or delights to be in; so a true Christian is known, as the apostle says, by his *having fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ*, 1 John i. 3.

(4.) We must enquire, whether we have a great concern for the glory and interest in our own souls, and an earnest desire that his name may be known and magnified in the world; and this accompanied with our using the utmost endeavours in our various stations and capacities in order thereunto?

2. The next thing that we are to examine ourselves about, before we come to the Lord's supper, is, what sense we have of sin? whether we are truly humbled for, and desirous to be delivered from it? It is not sufficient for us to take a general view of ourselves as sinners, in common with the rest of mankind, without being duly affected with it; but we must consider the various aggravations of sin, with a particular application thereof to ourselves; and how much we have exceeded many others therein, either before or since we were called by the grace of God, by which means we may take occasion to say, as the apostle does concerning himself, that we are *the chief of sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15. and a sense of the guilt hereof, when duly considered, will give us occasion to lie very low at the foot of God. We are also to take notice of our natural propensity and inclination to sin, and the various ways by which this has discovered itself in our actions; and accordingly we are to enquire,

(1.) Whether we have sinned knowingly, wilfully, presumptuously, and obstinately? or, whether we have been surprised into it, or ensnared by some sudden unforeseen temptation, and committed it without the full bent of our wills? whether we have striven against it, or given way to it, and suffered ourselves to be prevailed upon without making resistance?

(2.) We must enquire, whether we have continued in sin, or unfeignedly repented of it? whether sin sits light or heavy on our consciences? or, if our consciences are burdened with it, whether we seek relief against it in that way which Christ has prescribed in the gospel?

(3.) We must enquire, whether there are not some sins that more frequently and easily beset us? what they are, and whether we are daily watchful against them, and use our utmost endeavours to avoid them?

(4.) We must also enquire, whether we have not frequently relapsed into the same sin which we have resolved against at various times, and, in particular, at the Lord's table, and hereby broke our engagements; and if so, whether we did not rely too much on our own strength, when we made those resolutions against sin?

(5.) We are to enquire, whether sin gets ground upon us,

whereby grace is weakened? or, whether, though we commit it, we find its strength abated, and we enabled, in some measure, to mortify it, though we do not wholly abstain from it? as the apostle says, *That which I do, I allow not; but what I hate, that do I*, Rom. vii. 15.

(6.) We are also to enquire, whether our sins have not carried in them a great neglect of Christ, his blood, his grace, his benefits, as not thinking of them, admiring or prizing them above all things, nor laying hold on them by faith, and so not making a right use of his dying love, which is signified in the Lord's supper.

3. We are to examine ourselves, before we come to the Lord's table, what particular wants we have to be supplied. Our Saviour is to be considered in this ordinance, not only as signified by the external elements; but as present with his people when met together in his name, with earnest expectation of enjoying communion with him: And, as he is appointed to apply, as well as purchase redemption for us, we must consider him as having his hands full of spiritual blessings, to impart to his necessitous people, who come to him for them: Therefore they ought before they go, to enquire, not only, as has been before observed, what are their sins which are to be confessed and bewailed before him, but what it is more especially, that they stand in need of from him? The question that Christ will ask them, when they come there, is, what is thy petition, and what is thy request? what are those wants which thou desirest a supply of? Accordingly, we are before-hand to enquire, whether, though we have some little hope that we have experienced the grace of God in truth, yet we do not want a full assurance of our interest in Christ, *that we may know that we have eternal life*, 1 John v. 13, together with the joy of faith accompanying the actings thereof? and, whether we do not want enlargement of heart, and raised affections in holy duties? which the Psalmist seems to intend, when he says, *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name*, Psal. cxlii. 7.

Again, whether we do not want many experiences, which we have formerly had, of the grace of God, and his special presence in holy duties; or have not occasion to say with Job, *O that it were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me: When his candle shined upon my head, and, by his light I walked through darkness*, Job xxix. 2, 3. Moreover, we are to enquire, whether we do not want a greater degree of establishment in the great doctrines of the gospel; or to be kept steady in a time of temptation? and, whether we do not want a greater degree of zeal for the honour of God, in a day

in which many professors are lukewarm? as our Saviour observes concerning the church of Laodicea, *That they were neither cold nor hot*, Rev. iii. 15. or, whether we do not want together with this zeal, a compassion to the souls of others, who make shipwreck of faith, not having a good conscience, which may induce us, as the apostle says, *In meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth?* 2 Tim. ii. 25. and, whether we are duly affected with the degeneracy of the age wherein we live, and are not too negligent in bearing our testimony against the errors advanced therein? or, whether we understand the meaning of those various dispensations of providence, which we are under, and what is our present duty in compliance therewith? These things are of a more general nature, and to be made the subject of our enquiry, whenever we draw nigh to Christ in any ordinance in which we hope for a supply of our wants.

But there are other things which we ought to have a more particular regard to in our enquiries, when we are to engage in the ordinance of the Lord's supper.

(1.) In order to our partaking of it aright, we are to enquire, whether we do not want a clear and distinct apprehension of the covenant of grace, and the seals thereof, and how we are to act faith in a way of self-dedication, and how we ought to renew our covenant engagements with God, which we are more especially called to do therein?

(2.) Whether we do not want a broken heart, suitably affected with the dying love of Jesus Christ, which is signified therein, that we may *look on him who was pierced, and mourn*, Zech. xii. 10.

(3.) Whether we do not want to be led into the true way of improving Christ crucified, to answer all those accusations that are brought in against us, either by Satan or our own consciences, and how this is an expedient for the taking away the guilt and power of sin?

(4.) Whether we do not want to be made more like to Christ, and conformed to his death, that, while we behold him represented as dying for us, we may *reckon ourselves as dead to sin*, and to the world; and *that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin?* Rom. vi. 6. 10.

(5.) Whether we do not want an abiding impression of the love of Christ, and a greater steadfastness in our resolution, to adhere to him; that so, whatever grace we may be enabled to act, by strength derived from him, may be maintained and exercised, not only at that time, but when we are more immediately engaged in that ordinance?

These things we are to examine ourselves concerning, that we may spread our wants before the Lord at his table. And to induce us hereunto, we may consider, that our corrupt nature is very prone to think ourselves better than we really are; so that, how indigent and distressed soever we may be, we are ready to conclude, with the church of the Laodiceans, that *we are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*, Rev. iii. 17.

Moreover, if we are not truly sensible of our necessities, we shall not value Christ's fulness, or the rich provisions he has made for his people, and is pleased to dispense in this ordinance; as it is said, *The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*, Matt. ix. 12. and we must consider, that a great part of our work therein, consists in ejaculatory prayer, which we shall not be able to put up in a right manner, if we are not sensible of our wants; and one reason why we are so often at a loss in prayer, or go out of the presence of God empty, is, because our hearts are not enlarged therein, which they cannot be, unless we are affected with a sense of our necessities.

Now, to encourage us to examine ourselves concerning them, before we partake of the Lord's supper, let us consider that Christ invites us to draw nigh to him therein; that he may take occasion to communicate the blessings of his redemption, which are signified thereby; that he may supply our wants, satisfy our desires, surmount our difficulties, and apply to us the great and precious promises of the covenant of grace, which are to be sought for at his hands, by faith and prayer, which supposes the performance of this duty of self-examination, with respect to the blessings that we stand in need of from him.

4. We are, before we partake of the Lord's supper, to examine ourselves concerning the truth and measure of our knowledge in divine things; inasmuch as without the knowledge hereof, the heart cannot be good, nor any spiritual duty engaged in, in a right manner. As for a perfect comprehensive knowledge of divine truths, that is not to be expected, by reason of the weakness of our capacities, and the imperfection of this present state; wherein, as the apostle says, *we see but through a glass darkly*, or, as it is said elsewhere, *We are but of yesterday, and know, comparatively, nothing*, Job viii. 9.

However, there is a degree of knowledge, which is not only attainable, but necessary to our right engaging in this ordinance; and this does not consist barely in our knowing that there is a God, or that he is to be worshipped, or that there was such a person as our Saviour, who lived in the world, was crucified, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead: For a person may have a general notion of all these things, and yet be



unacquainted with the end and design of Christ's death, and the blessings and privileges of the covenant of grace, which he procured thereby, or with the claim that a person may lay by faith, to them; without which, there is not a sufficient knowledge, such as the apostle calls *a discerning the Lord's body*, 1 Cor. xi. 29. which we ought to do in this ordinance.

Now, that knowledge of divine truths, which ought not only to be pressed after, but, we are to examine ourselves, whether we have, in some measure attained to, respects,

(1.) The person of Christ, as God-man, Mediator, and the offices which he executes as such; and more particularly, the manner and end of his executing his priestly office, in which he offered himself as a sacrifice for sin, which we are more especially to commemorate in this ordinance.

(2.) We must have an affecting sense or knowledge of the guilt of sin; and, as a relief against it, must be acquainted with the doctrine of the free grace of God, displayed in the gospel, and founded in the blood of Jesus, whereby sin is pardoned. We are also to be fully convinced of the almighty power of the Holy Ghost, whereby alone it can be subdued, and of the method he takes therein to make the redemption purchased by Christ, effectual to answer that end.

(3.) We are to endeavour, in some measure, to know God as our Father, and covenant-God in Christ, who bestows on his people the rich and splendid entertainment of his house, and satisfies them with the abundance of his goodness, pursuant to what Christ has purchased. And we must also know what it is to deal with him as those who see themselves obliged herein to devote themselves to him as their God; and what large expectations they may have from him, whom he has avouched to be his peculiar people; and how this is a foundation of that humble boldness with which they are encouraged to come *unto the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*, Heb. iv. 16.

Moreover, we are not only to enquire, whether we are apprehensive of the excellency, glory, and suitableness of those great things, that are revealed in the gospel, to answer our particular exigencies, and render us happy in the enjoyment of God; but whether the knowledge hereof makes a due impression on our hearts, is of a transforming nature, and has a tendency to regulate the conduct of our lives, and put us on the application of these great things to ourselves?

As to the degree of our knowledge we must enquire, whether it be only a single apprehension that the doctrines of the gospel are true, or, at most, contains in it some general ideas of their being excellent and worthy of the highest esteem; but whether we can prove them to be true, and render a reason of

our faith, without which, it may, indeed, be rightly placed as to its object? But it cannot be said to be deeply rooted; and therefore it is exposed to greater danger of being foiled, weakened, or overthrown by temptation. We must also enquire, whether we grow in knowledge in proportion to those opportunities or means of grace that we are favoured with, which the apostle calls *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 18.

5. We are to examine ourselves concerning the truth and degree of our faith, and other graces that are inseparably connected with it. As for faith, we are to enquire, whether it be a living, or what the apostle calls a *dead faith*, James ii. 17, 18. as being alone, and destitute of those good works which ought to proceed from it? Whether it only contains in it an assent to the truth of divine revelation; or, whether it puts us upon a closure with Christ, embracing him in all his offices, and trusting in him for all those benefits which he has purchased by his blood? We must also enquire, what fruits or effects it produces, and what other graces accompany or flow from it? Whether it inclines us to set the highest value on Christ, as being in our esteem, altogether lovely; and gives us low thoughts of ourselves, as having nothing but what we depend on him for, or derive from him? Whether it be attended with some degree of holiness in heart and life, as the apostle speaks of the *heart's being purified by faith*, Acts xv. 9. Again, whether it be such a faith as *overcomes the world*, 1 John v. 14. and prevents our being easily turned aside from God, by the snares that we may meet with in it? Whether we are inclined hereby, to confess ourselves to be *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*, Heb. xi. 13. and *desire a better country*, ver. 16.

There are many other fruits and effects of faith, which the apostle mentions in Heb. xi. by which we may examine ourselves concerning the truth and sincerity of this grace; and there are several graces mentioned in this answer, which are connected with faith, concerning which, we must enquire, whether they are found in us, particularly repentance, which must of necessity be exercised in this ordinance as well as faith; inasmuch as by the one, we behold Christ's glory, and, by the other, we take a view of sins deformity? And it is such a repentance, as inclines us not only to hate sin, but forsake and turn from it, as seeing the detestable and odious nature of it, in what Christ endured to make satisfaction for it.

But since faith and repentance have been particularly considered under a foregoing answer, together with the nature, properties, and effects thereof\*; we shall pass them over, and

\* See Quest. lxxii. Vol. III. page 97. & seq. and Quest. lxxvi, lxxxv, lxxxvii.

consider the graces of love to God, desire after Christ, and our using endeavours to approve ourselves his servants and subjects, by constant acts of obedience to him : These things are to be the subject-matter of our enquiry, before we engage in this ordinance. It is very suitable to the occasion, to enquire, whether we love Christ or no; inasmuch as we are to behold and be affected with the most amazing instance of love, which he has expressed to us ; Let us therefore enquire, whether our love to him be superlative, far exceeding that which we bear to all creatures, how valuable soever they may be to us, how nearly soever we may be related to them, or whatever engagements we may be laid under to esteem and value them.

We may also try the sincerity of our love to God, by enquiring, whether it puts us on performing the most difficult duties for his sake, with the greatest cheerfulness? And, whether we are hereby encouraged to bear the most afflictive evils with patience; because it is his pleasure that we should be exercised therewith, 1 Sam. iii. 18. Let us also enquire, whether we love him with all our heart, or, whether our love is divided betwixt him and the creature, whereby our affections are often drawn aside from him? And, whether it puts us upon improving our time, strength, and all our other talents to his glory? Whether we have no interest separate from his, which we cannot but prefer to our chief joy? whether this be the very end of living? As the apostle says, *For me to live is Christ*, Phil. i. 21. and, whether we are earnestly desirous to bring others to him, not only by recommending his glory to them in words; but by expressing the esteem and value we have for him, in the whole course of our conversation? Whether we are hereby inclined to hate every thing that he hates; as the Psalmist says, *Ye that love the Lord hate evil*, Psal. xcvi. 10. and whether we make those things the object of our choice that he delights in?

Moreover, we are to enquire, whether we have had any communion with him in ordinances, and particularly in this ordinance at other times? And when he is pleased to withhold this privilege from us in any degree, that hereby we may see that all our comforts flow from him; or, when he has a design to humble us for those sins that provoke him to depart from us, whether we are earnestly desirous of his return, and cannot be satisfied with any thing short of him?

As for our desires after Christ, which we are farther to examine ourselves about, we must enquire, whether, that, which moves or inclines us to desire him, be the view we have of the glory of his person, and the delight that arises from our contemplating his divine excellencies; or whether we desire him,

only for the sake of his benefits, or, that he might deliver us from the wrath to come? Whether we desire Christ only when his service is attended with the esteem of men, or, as a means to gain some worldly advantage from them? Or, whether we desire to adhere to him, when we are called to suffer reproach, or even the loss of all things for his sake; which will be a convincing evidence of the sincerity of our desires after, and, consequently, of our love to him?

And, we are farther to enquire, whether our love to Christ, and desire after him, discovers itself by renewed acts of obedience to him; particularly, whether our obedience be universal or partial, constant or wavering, performed with delight and pleasure or with some reluctance? And, whether it puts us upon universal holiness, as being induced hereunto by gospel-motives? Thus concerning our examining ourselves about our faith, repentance, love to Christ, desire after him, and our endeavour to yield obedience to him in all things.

The next thing we are to examine ourselves concerning, is, whether we have such a love to the brethren, and charity to all men, whereby we are disposed to exercise forgiveness to those that have done us any injuries? The Lord's-supper being an ordinance of mutual fellowship, we are obliged to behave ourselves towards one another as members of the same body, subjects of the same Lord, engaged in the same religious exercise; and consequently, are obliged to love one another, whereby it will appear, that we are Christ's disciples, John xiii. 35. This love consists in our desiring and endeavouring to promote the spiritual interest of each other, to the end that Christ herein may be glorified; and it includes in it that charity that casts a veil over their failures and defects, and our forgiving those injuries which they have, at any time, done to us. This frame of spirit is certainly becoming the nature of the ordinance, in which we hope to be made partakers of the fruits and effects of Christ's love, and to obtain forgiveness from him, of all the injuries we have done against him; therefore it is very necessary for us to enquire,

[1.] Concerning our love to the brethren, whether it be such as is a distinguishing character of those who are Christ's friends and followers; or which, as the apostle expresses it, will afford an evidence to us, that we are *passed from death to life*, 1 John iii. 14. And, in order to our discovering this, let us examine ourselves, whether we love the brethren, because we behold the image of God in them? Which is, in effect, to love and *glorify God in them*, Gal. i. 24. Again, whether our love to men leads us to desire and endeavour to be reckoned a common good to all, according to the utmost of our ability? As it is said of Merdecas, that *he was accepted of the multi-*

*rude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed, Esther x. 8.*

Again, we are to enquire, whether our love be more especially to the souls of men, as well as their outward concerns? This consists in our using all suitable endeavours to bring them under conviction of sin, by faithful and well-timed reproofs; the contrary to which, or our refusing to rebuke our *neighbour or brother*, and thereby *suffering sin upon him*, is reckoned no other than an *hating* of him, Lev. xix. 17. We are also to express our love to the souls of men, by endeavouring to persuade them to believe in Christ, if they are in an unconverted state, or to walk as becomes his gospel, if they have been made partakers of the grace thereof: Thus the apostle expresses his love to those to whom he writes, when he says, *I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you*, Gal. iv. 19. and elsewhere, he signifies to another of the churches, how *affectionately desirous* he was of them; which made him *willing, not only to impart the gospel of God, but his own soul; because they were dear unto him*, 1 Thes. ii. 8.

Again, we must enquire, whether our love puts us upon choosing such to be our associates that truly fear the Lord; whom we count, as the Psalmist expresses it, *The excellent, in whom is all our delight?* Psal. xvi. 3. and, on the other hand, whether we avoid the society of, or intimacy with, those that are Christ's open enemies; the contrary to which, good Jehoshaphat was reprov'd for by the prophet, when he says, *Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?* 2 Chron. xix. 2. Again, let us enquire, whether our love to men is then expressed when it is most needed? As it is said, *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*, Prov. xvii. 17. Again, whether we are inclined to all those acts of charity which covereth a multitude of faults? As the apostle describes it, that it *suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things*, 1 Cor. xiii. 4,—8.

[2.] We are to enquire, whether our love to men be expressed in forgiving injuries; which is a frame of spirit absolutely necessary for our engaging in any ordinance; as our Saviour says, *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, Matt. v. 23, 24. that is, if there be a misunderstanding between you, whoever be the aggressor, or gave the first occasion for it, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother; that is, do whatever is in thy power in order thereunto,*

*and then come and offer thy gift.* And this is more necessary when we engage in this ordinance, in which we hope to obtain forgiveness of the many offences which we have committed against God; and accordingly the apostle says, *Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,* 1 Cor. v. 8. It is no difficult matter for us to know whether we are disposed to forgive those who have injured us; therefore the principal thing we are to examine ourselves about, is, whether we do this with a right frame of spirit, as considering how prone we are to do those things ourselves, which may render it necessary for us to be forgiven, both by God and man? and whether, as the consequence hereof, though we were before this, inclined to over-look those graces which are discernable in them; yet now we can love them as brethren, and glorify God for what they have experienced, and be earnestly solicitous for their salvation as well as our own? Thus concerning the first duty mentioned in this answer, *viz.* our examining ourselves before we engage in this ordinance. We now proceed to consider some other duties mentioned therein, *viz.*

II. The renewing the exercise of those graces, which are necessary to our right engaging in it, whereby the sincerity and truth thereof may be discerned: Therefore, since faith, repentance, and several other graces, ought to be exercised in this ordinance, it is necessary for us to give a specimen thereof, before we engage in it. As the artificer first tries the instrument he is to make use of in some curious work before he uses it, so the truth and sincerity of our faith is to be tried before it be exercised in this ordinance.

There is another duty preparatory to the Lord's Supper, mentioned in this answer, *viz.* serious meditation, that so we may not engage in it without considering the greatness of the Majesty with whom we have to do, together with our own vileness and unworthiness to approach his presence: We must also consider his power, wisdom, and goodness, to encourage us to hope for those supplies of grace from him, which we stand in need of; and we are to have an awful sense of his omnipresence and omniscience, as he is an heart-searching God, to excite in us an holy reverence, and prevent the wandering of our thoughts and affections from him, or any unbecoming behaviour in his presence; and, more particularly we are to consider, before-hand, the end and design of Christ's instituting this ordinance, *viz.* that his dying love to sinners might be signified and shewed forth, as an encouragement to our faith, and an inducement to thanksgiving and praise, as the nature of the thing calls for it.



After all this it is farther observed, that we are to endeavour to prepare for this ordinance by fervent prayer, as being sensible, that when we have done our best, we shall be too much unprepared for it, unless we have the special assistance of God, when engaging in it; to which I may apply Hezekiah's words, *The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his father; though he be not cleansed according to the cleansing of the sanctuary,* 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19. And we are to be earnest with him, that he would give us a believing view of Christ crucified, and especially of our interest in him; that we may be able to say as the apostle does, *He loved me, and gave himself for me,* Gal. ii. 20. and that he would apply to us those blessings which he has purchased by his death, which we desire to wait upon him for, when engaging in this ordinance, that our drawing nigh to him therein may redound to his glory and our spiritual advantage.

**QUEST. CLXXII.** *May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, and of his due preparation, come to the Lord's Supper?*

**ANSW.** One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not assured thereof; and in God's account, hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity, in which case (because promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians,) he is to bewail his unbelief; and labour to have his doubts resolved, and so doing, he may, and ought to come to the Lord's Supper, that he may be farther strengthened.

**QUEST. CLXXIII.** *May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, be kept from it?*

**ANSW.** Such as are found to be ignorant, or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, may, and ought to be kept from that sacrament by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.

**I**N these answers we have an account of those who are the subjects of this ordinance and ought to partake of it, or of

those who must be kept from it: the former respects, more especially doubting Christians, who desire to receive satisfaction, whether they ought to engage in it or no; the latter respects those who are ready to presume that they are qualified for it, and ought to partake of it; though, indeed, they are to be excluded from it.

I. As to the case of one who doubteth of his being in Christ, and duly prepared for the Lord's Supper: Here are several things that may afford matter of encouragement to him; and accordingly it is observed,

1. That though this be a matter of doubt to him, as being destitute of assurance of his being in Christ; yet he may be mistaken in the judgment which he passes concerning himself: since assurance, as has been before observed, is not of the essence of saving faith\*. For a person may rely on, or give up himself to Christ, by a direct act of faith, who cannot at the same time, take the comfort that would otherwise arise from thence, that Christ has loved him, and given himself for him. Many have reason to complain of the weakness of their faith, and the great resistance and disturbance which they meet with from the corruption of nature: And others, who have assurance, at present, of their interest in Christ, may afterwards, through divine desertion, lose the comfortable sense thereof; so that we must not conclude, that every doubting believer is destitute of faith. Such are to be tenderly dealt with, and not discouraged from attending on that ordinance, which others, who converse with them, cannot but think they have a right to, and are habitually prepared for; though they themselves very much question, whether they are actually meet for it, as being apprehensive that they cannot exercise those graces, that are necessary to their partaking of this ordinance in a right manner. However, it is observed,

(1.) That there are some things, which, if duly considered by such an one, would afford him, ground of hope; though it may be, he cannot sufficiently improve them to his own comfort. As,

[1.] If he be truly affected with his want of assurance, and, as the result thereof, is filled with uneasiness in his own mind, laments his condition, and can take no comfort in any outward enjoyments, while destitute of it; and, if he be importunate with God in prayer, that he would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and grant him the exercise, as well as the joy of faith. Moreover, if he frequently examines himself with impartiality, and an earnest desire to be satisfied, as to his state; and if, notwithstanding this, he still walks in darkness,

\* See Quest. lxxxii. Vol. III. page 268.

and his doubts and fears prevail against him, he has some ground to conclude, that he is better than he apprehends himself to be, if he be truly humbled for those sins that may be reckoned the procuring cause thereof, and determines to be still waiting, till God shall be pleased to discover to him his interest in forgiving grace, and thereby resolve his doubts, and expel his fears, which render him so very uneasy.

[2.] A person has some ground of hope, if he can say, that he unfeignedly desires Christ and grace above all things, and can find satisfaction in nothing short of him ; in this respect it may be said, that Christ is precious to him, as he is to them that believe. And to this we may add, that if he desires to forsake all sin, as being offensive, and contrary to him ; so that when he commits it, he can readily say with the apostle, *That which I do I allow not of ; for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate that do I ;* and from hence he concludes himself *wretched ;* and earnestly desires to be *delivered from the body of this death*, Rom. vii. 15, 24.

(2.) There are some promises which a weak Christian may lay hold on for his encouragement ; as,

1st, If the guilt of sin lies as an heavy burden upon him, and is the occasion of his doubts about his being in Christ ; there are promises of forgiveness, Mich. vii. 18, 19. Isa. lv. 7, 8.

2dly, If he complains of the power of sin, and its prevalence over him, there is a promise that is suited to his case, in Rom. vi. 14. ' Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye ' are not under the law, but under grace.'

3dly, If satan's temptations are very grievous to him, and such as he can hardly resist, there are promises suited to this case, in 1 Cor. x. 13. that ' God will not suffer his people to be ' tempted above that they are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape ;' and in Rom. xvi. 20. ' The ' God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'

4thly, If he wants enlargement, and raised affections in prayer, or other religious duties ; which is very discouraging to him, that promise may afford him some relief, in Zech. xii. 10. ' I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication.' And, in Psal. x. 17. ' Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the ' humble : Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ' ear to hear.'

5thly If our doubts arise from frequent backslidings, and relapses into sin, we may apply that promise in Psal. xxiii. 3. *He restoreth my soul*, &c. And, Hos. xiv. 4. ' I will heal their ' backsliding, I will love them freely ; for mine anger is turned ' away from them : ' And in Isa. lvii. 17, 18. in which it is

supposed, that God was wroth, and hid himself from his people for their iniquity ; and they are described as *going on forwardly in the way of their heart* ; yet God says, ‘ I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and to his mourners :’ And, in Hos. xi. 7 — 9. where God’s people are described as bent to backslide from him ; yet he determines not to destroy them, but says, in a very moving way, ‘ How shall I give thee up Ephraim ? How shall I deliver thee Israel, &c. Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together ? I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger ; I will not return to destroy Ephraim ; for I am God and not man, the holy One in the midst of thee.’

6thly, If we want communion with God, or his presence with us in his ordinances ; which makes us conclude that we are not in Christ : Let us consider what is said in Isa. xlv. 19. ‘ I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain :’ And, in chap. liv. 7, 8. ‘ For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.’

7thly, If we are under frequent convictions, but they soon wear off, which occasions us to fear that we never experienced a thorough work of conversion, let us consider, Isa. lxvi. 9. ‘ Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord ?’ And, in Zech. iv. 10. ‘ Who hath despised the day of small things ?’ And, in Isa. lxv. 8. ‘ As they new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it ; So will I do for my servants sake, that I may not destroy them all.’

8thly, If we are in a withering and declining condition, and want reviving ; or, if we complain of barrenness under the means of grace, so that we may attend upon them, as we apprehend, to very little purpose ; there are some promises that are suited to this case, as Hos. xiv. 7, 8. Isa. xlviii. 17.

9thly, If our doubts arise from the hardness of our hearts, so that we cannot mourn for sin as we ought to do, or would do, let us consider what God has promised in Ezek. vii. 16. Deut. xxx. 6. Acts v. 31.

10thly, If we are under the visible tokens of God’s displeasure, so that we are ready to conclude, that he distributes terrors to us in his anger ; and, as the consequence thereof, we walk in darkness, and are far from peace : There are many promises that are suited to this case, as Jer. iii. 5. Psal. ciii. 8, — 10. Isa. xii. 1. Joel ii. 13. Isa. l. 10. Psal. lxxix. 15. and xlii. 11.

2. We have a further account how such, who are at pre-

sent, discouraged from coming to the Lord's table, ought to manage themselves in this case. And here it is observed, that they ought to bewail their unbelief, to labour to have their doubts resolved; and, instead of being discouraged, they should come to the Lord's supper, to be further strengthened. This advice is not given to stupid sinners, or such as are unconcerned about their state, or never had the least ground to conclude that they have had communion with God in any ordinance; and, especially if their distress of conscience arises rather from a slavish fear of the wrath of God, than a filial fear of him; or, if they are more concerned about the dreadful consequences of sin, than the intrinsic evil that is in it, I say, this advice is not given to such, but those, as before described, who lament after the Lord, earnestly seek him, though they cannot, at present, find him; and have fervent desires of his presence, though no sensible enjoyment thereof, and appear to have some small degrees of grace, though it be very weak: In this case a few words of advice ought to be given to them; particularly,

(1.) That they should take heed of giving way to any hard thoughts of God; but, on the other hand, lay the whole blame hereof on themselves. Thus God says by the prophet, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?" Jer. ii. 17.

(2.) They should give glory to, depend on, and seek relief from the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who glorifies himself by sealing believers unto the day of redemption; and, together with this, bestows those comforts on them which they stand in need of.

(3.) They must endeavour, to their utmost, to act grace, and so go forward in the ways of God, though they do not go on comfortably, and not say, "why should I wait on the Lord any longer? Are they sometimes afraid they shall not arrive safely to the end of their race, they should nevertheless resolve not to give out, or to run no longer in it; and because their way is attended with darkness, or hedged up with thorns, they should not determine, for that reason, to go backward, as though they had never set their faces heaven-ward.

(4.) They ought to lie at God's foot, acknowledging their unworthiness of that peace which they desire, but are destitute of, and plead for his special presence, that would give an happy turn to the frame of their spirits, as that which they prefer to all the enjoyments of life; as the Psalmist says, 'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us,' Psal. iv. 6.

(5.) It would be adviseable for such to contract an intimacy, and frequently converse with experienced Christians, who know the depths of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the heart of man, and the methods of divine grace in restoring comforts to those who are, at present, destitute of them, agreeably to what they themselves have experienced in the like case, 2 Cor. i. 4.

(6.) They ought, as a farther means for the strengthening of their faith, and establishing their comforts, to wait on God in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, hoping for Christ's presence therein; in which many have found that they have been enlivened, quickened, and comforted, while others, through the neglect hereof, have had their doubts and fears increased. And this leads us to consider,

II. What is contained in the latter of the answers we are explaining, which is applicable to those who desire to come to the Lord's supper, but are to be kept from it. Here it is taken for granted, that all are not to be admitted to this ordinance, though it may be, they make a general profession of the christian faith, and are not willing that any should question their right to it. These are described in this answer,

1. As being ignorant of the great doctrines of the gospel, and, consequently, unacquainted with Christ, whom they never truly applied themselves to, nor received by faith; and therefore they cannot improve this ordinance aright, or have communion with Christ therein.

2. They are to be excluded from the Lord's supper, who are scandalous or immoral in their practice, whatever pretensions they make to the character of christians: These are described by the apostle, as persons who *profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16. Such ought not to have communion with those whom the apostle describes as *called to be saints*, Rom. i. 7. nor can they partake of this ordinance aright, since they are not apprized of the end and design thereof, nor are they able, as the apostle expresses it, to *discern the Lord's body*, 1 Cor. ix. 27. for, if they are strangers to themselves, how can they apply the benefits of Christ's redemption to their own case? and, if they neglect the preparatory duty of self-examination, so that they do not know their own wants, how can they go to Christ in this ordinance for a supply thereof? or, if they do not desire the spiritual blessings of the covenant of grace, what right can they have to make use of the seals thereof? and if they are openly and visibly of another family, under the dominion of the powers of darkness, what right have they to the privileges which Christ has purchased for those who are members of his family, and spiritually united to him?



**Object. 1.** To what has been said concerning those that are to be excluded from this ordinance, it is objected, that it appears, that both good and bad have a right to it, from what our Saviour says in the parable of the wheat and the tares, in Mat. xiii. 29. both which are said to *grow together until the harvest*, when the reapers will be sent to *gather first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, and the wheat into the barn*: So that hypocrites, and sincere christians, are to continue together in the same church, and, consequently to partake of the same ordinances.

**Ans.** To this it may be replied; this is not the sense of the parable; for our Saviour explains it otherwise, when he says in ver. 38. *The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one.* And from hence we may infer, that good and bad men are, through the forbearance of God, suffered to live together in the world; but it gives no countenance to this supposition, that the wicked ought to be joined with the godly as members of the same church: Not but that hypocrites may, and often do intrude themselves into the churches of Christ; yet since this is not known to them, they are not to blame for it, the heart of man being known to God alone; and the judgment that we are to pass concerning those who are admitted into church-fellowship, or to the Lord's supper in particular, is to be founded on that credible profession which they make; in which, though it be possible for them to deceive others, yet the guilt and ill consequence thereof, will only affect themselves.

**Object. 2.** It is further objected, that Judas was at the Lord's supper when it was first instituted by our Saviour, though he knew him to be an hypocrite and a traitor, and that he would speedily execute what he had designed against his life; and if so, then all ought to be admitted to this ordinance. And the reason that is generally assigned why he was there at that time, is, because it is said, in Luke xxii. 14. *When the hour was come, he sat down, and his twelve apostles with him*; and afterwards we read, in ver. 19. that *he took bread and brake it, &c. and also the cup after supper, &c.* ver. 20. and then it is said, in ver. 21. *Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.* This is supposed, by some, to have been spoken by Christ when they were eating the Lord's supper; from whence it may be concluded that Judas was there.

**Ans.** But to this it may be replied; that it seems much more probable that he was not there when the Lord's supper was administered though he joined with Christ and the other apostles in eating the passover; for we must consider,

(1.) That the passover and the Lord's supper were celebrated, one immediately after the other, at the same table, or sitting; therefore the hand of Judas might be with Christ on the table, in the former, though not in the latter: So that, though these words, *the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table*, are inserted after the account of both these ordinances being concluded; yet we have ground to suppose, they were spoken while they were eating the passover, when Judas was present.

(2.) It appears yet more probable that he was not present at the Lord's supper, from the account which John gives of this matter, in chap. xiii. 21. wherein our Saviour tells them, that *one of them should betray him*: and, in ver. 26. he discovers that he meant Judas, by giving him the sop; and in ver. 30, it is said, that *having received the sop, he went immediately out*. Now it is certain there was no sop in the Lord's supper, as there was in the passover, inasmuch as there was no flesh therein: Therefore Judas went out when they were eating the passover, before they began to partake of the Lord's supper; being, as we may reasonably suppose, in a rage that his hypocrisy should be detected, and he marked out as a traitor, who was, before this, reckoned as good a man as any of them: Therefore we have not sufficient ground from hence to conclude, that wicked men ought to be admitted to partake of the Lord's supper.

*Object. 3.* For christians to exclude any from the Lord's supper, would argue a great deal of pride, or vain-glorious boasting, and it is, as it were, to say to them who are excluded, "Stand off, for we are holier than you."

*Ans. 1.* A believer may with thankfulness, acknowledge the distinguishing grace of God vouchsafed to him, and not to others; and, at the same time, bless him, that he has given him a right to the privilege of his house, which all are not admitted to partake of, without doing this in a boasting way; he may say with the apostle in 1 Cor. xv. 10. *By the grace of God I am what I am*; and yet at the same time, deal faithfully with those who are destitute of this grace; he may bless God for the right which he hopes he has to this ordinance, and yet it is not his duty to admit them to it who have no right.

2. It is one thing not to admit persons who are unqualified to this ordinance, and another thing to despise them upon this account. Our business is not to reproach them, but to treat them with meekness; if peradventure God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, that hereby they may appear to have a right to it.

*Object. 4.* If wicked men are to be excluded from one ordinance which Christ has instituted in his church, they may, for

the same reason be excluded from all ; and so they may as well be debarred the privilege of hearing the word, and joining with the church in public prayer.

*Ans.* There is not the same reason for excluding wicked men from hearing the word, or joining in prayer with the church, as there is for refusing to admit them to partake of the Lord's supper. For prayer, and preaching the word, are God's appointed means for the working the grace of faith, instructing the ignorant, awakening the stupid and secure sinner, and putting him on complying with that method of salvation which God has prescribed in the gospel, and embracing Christ as offered therein : Whereas, on the other hand, the Lord's supper is an ordinance which supposes the soul to have, before this, received Christ by faith ; and therefore he is therein to feed upon him, and to take comfort from what he has done and suffered for him, as conducive to the farther mortification of indwelling sin ; which supposes that he has had, before this, some experience of the grace of God in truth. Thus concerning the exclusion of ignorant or immoral persons, as being not qualified for the Lord's supper.

And here we may farther observe, that they who bring these and such-like objections, with a design to open the door of the church so wide, that all may be received into it, and partake of those ordinances by which it is more particularly distinguished from the world, are very ready, in defence of their own cause, to charge others with being too severe in their censures, and refusing to admit any into church-communion, unless they can tell the very time in which they were converted, and the means by which this work was begun, and carried on ; and this they are obliged to do in so public a manner, as that many are denied the privilege of partaking of this ordinance, for a mere circumstance ; which is an extreme as much to be avoided as the receiving unqualified persons to the Lord's supper.

But it may be replied to this, that since this charge is rather the result of surmise than founded on sufficient evidence, it deserves to have less notice taken of it : However, this I would say in answer to it, that I never knew it to be the practice of any church of Christ, to exclude persons from its communion, because they knew not the time or means of their conversion ; which may be sometimes occasioned by their having been favored with the blessing of a religious education and restraining grace from their childhood, so that they have not run those lengths in sin which others have done ; and therefore the change which is wrought in conversion, especially as to what concerns the time and manner thereof, is less discernible. Sometimes the work has been begun with a less degree of

the terrors of conscience, under a sense of the guilt of sin, and the condemning sentence of the law, than others have experienced : These have been drawn with the cords of love, and the grace of God has descended upon them insensibly, like the dew upon the grass ; and therefore all that can be perceived by them, or that is to be required of them as a necessary qualification for their being admitted to the ordinances and privileges which belong to believers, is their discovering those fruits of faith which are discernable in the conversation of such as have experienced the grace of God in truth.

As to the other part of the charge, in which some churches are pretended to insist on such terms of communion as are merely circumstantial, so as to refuse to receive any that cannot comply with them : This is to be answered by those who appear to be liable to it. All that I shall therefore add under this head, is, that since a visible profession of faith in Christ is to be made, as necessary to constitute a visible church, and the conversation of those who make it, ought to be apparently agreeable thereunto : And inasmuch as none are obliged to make any thing known to the church, that contains the least appearance of dishonour or reflection on their character in the world ; but are only required to testify and give a proof of their steady adherence to Christ, and their desire to embrace him in all his offices, as well as worship him in all his ordinances ; this cannot justly be reckoned an unnecessary circumstance or making that a term of communion which Christ has not made, and thereby excluding those who have a right to the Lord's supper.

And now we have considered the terms of communion, and the qualifications for it, as well as the spiritual privileges that are to be expected by those who have a right to it. I cannot but observe, how this is abused, and practically disowned, by those who engage in this ordinance merely as a qualification for a civil employment. A person may certainly be a good member of a commonwealth, and very fit to be entrusted with the administration of the civil affairs thereof, who has little or nothing to say concerning his experiences of the grace of God. To assert, that a right to a civil employment is founded on the same qualifications that give a person a right to partake of the Lord's supper, would be to advance, not only that which is indefensible, but what would be almost universally denied, unless it could be proved, that all might partake of it, the contrary to which, we have endeavoured to maintain.

Moreover, when Christ instituted this ordinance, his people were in no expectation of bearing any part in the civil government ; therefore this was most remote from the first intent and design thereof : And we often find that this is a temptation to

men to profane this ordinance, and lays a burden on the consciences of those who know themselves unprepared for it, who had little or nothing in view but the securing their secular interest; by which means it is to be feared, that many of them eat and drink unworthily, and, instead of receiving advantage by it, bring their consciences under such entanglements, that they cannot easily extricate themselves from. Thus concerning those who are to be admitted to be partakers of the Lord's Supper, though doubting of their meetness for it, and others being excluded, who have no right to it.

The last thing observed in this answer, is, that they who are not, at present, deemed fit for this ordinance, may afterwards be admitted to it when they have received instruction, and manifested a thorough reformation; or when, by their diligent attendance on other ordinances, or means of grace, accompanied with the divine blessing, that, which at present disqualifies them, being removed, they may humbly and thankfully wait on God therein, and hope for his presence and blessing; and then the church will have reason, as well as themselves, to bless God for that grace which they have experienced, whereby they may come to it for the better, and not for the worse.

**QUEST. CLXXIV.** *What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in the time of the administration of it?*

**ANSW.** It is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces, in judging themselves and sorrowing for sin, in hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fulness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace, in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.

**QUEST. CLXXV.** *What is the duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?*

**ANSW.** The duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is, seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what

success; if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfil their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance; but if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at the sacrament; in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time; but if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterward with more care and diligence.

**T**HESE two answers respect our behaviour in, and after our engaging in this ordinance.

I. We are to consider with what frame of spirit we are to engage therein; how our meditations are to be employed, and what graces are to be exercised.

1. Here is something observed, which is common to it with all other ordinances, viz. that we are to wait on God with an holy reverence arising from a becoming sense of his divine perfections, and the infinite distance we stand in from him; and we are to impress on our souls an awful sense of his omniscience and omnipresence; whereby he knows with what frame of spirit we draw nigh to him, better than this is known to ourselves; and highly resents every thing that is contrary to his holiness, or unbecoming the character of those who are worshipping at his footstool.

2. There are other things peculiar to this ordinance, that are necessary in order to our engaging in it in a right manner; as,

(1.) We are diligently to observe the sacramental elements and actions, which contain the external part of the duty required of us. The bread and wine, together with the actions to be performed in our receiving them by Christ's appointment, are, as has been before observed, significant and instructive signs of his death, and the benefits which he has procured for us thereby, that are to be attended to, and brought to our remembrance in this ordinance.

Moreover, we are to consider, that though the blessings of the covenant of grace are signified thereby, as they are instituted, not natural signs thereof; yet the gospel, in which we have an account of what Christ did, and suffered for us, is a large and sufficient explication hereof for the direction of our faith, when conversant about them.

(2.) We are affectionately to meditate on the sufferings and death of Christ, which are signified thereby. Meditation is a great part of the work we are to be engaged in, and the death of Christ is the principal subject thereof; accordingly



we are to consider his condescending love in giving his life a ransom for us; and, in order to our being affected therewith, and to excite our admiration and thankfulness for it, we must contemplate the divine excellency and glory of his Person; which adds an infinite value to every part of his obedience and sufferings. We must also consider the kind of death he died; which is called his being *wounded, bruised*, Isa. liii. 5. *cut off* Dan. ix. 26. and is represented as that which had the external mark of the curse of God annexed to it; upon which account he is said to have been made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13.

We are also to consider the character of the persons for whom he laid down his life; who are described as being *without strength*, or ability to do what is good, and *ungodly*, and so open enemies to him, Rom. v. 6, 8, 10. and therefore there was nothing in us that could induce him to do this for us. We are also to consider, that he died in our room and stead, as *bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows*, Isa. liii. 4. and being *delivered for our offences*, Rom. iv. 25. And we are also to consider the great ends designed thereby, as God is hereby glorified, his holiness and justice in demanding and receiving a full satisfaction for sin, illustrated in the highest degree; so that he declares himself *well-pleased* in what Christ has done and suffered, Matt. iii. 17. and *well-pleased* likewise, as the prophet expresses it, *for his righteousness' sake*, Isa. xlii. 21. We are also to consider the great advantage that we hope to receive thereby, as *being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him*, Rom. v. 9. This is therefore the highest inducement to us, to give up ourselves entirely to him.

3. We are, in this ordinance, to stir up ourselves to a vigorous exercise of those graces that the nature of the ordinance requires: And accordingly we are,

(1.) To judge ourselves; as the apostle says, *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*, 1 Cor. xi. 31. and this we ought to do, by accusing, condemning, and passing sentence against ourselves, for those sins which we have committed against Christ, whereby we were plunged into the utmost depths of misery, in which we should for ever have continued, had he not redeemed us by his blood. We are also to acknowledge our desert of God's wrath and curse; so that *if he should mark iniquity, we could not stand*, Psal. cxxx. 3. and this sense of sin ought to be particular, including in it those transgressions which are known to none but God and ourselves; as we ought to make a particular application of the blood of Christ for the forgiveness thereof. This is certainly very suitable to the nature of the ordinance we are engaged in, wherein Christ is set forth as a sacrifice for sin, and we

are led, at the same time, to be duly affected with our malady, and the great remedy God has provided ; which will have a tendency to enhance our praise and thankfulness to him, who loved us, and gave himself for us.

(2.) We are to exercise a godly sorrow for sin, which is the ground of all that distress and misery which we are liable to : This ought to take its rise from the corruption of nature, from whence all actual sins proceed ; and we are to bewail our sins of omission, as well as commission ; our neglect to perform duties that are incumbent on us, as well as those sins that have been committed by us with the greatest presumption, deliberation, wilfulness, and obstinacy, which contain in them the highest ingratitude and contempt of the blood of Christ, and the method of salvation by him. And this sorrow for sin ought to produce those good effects of praying and striving against it, endeavouring to return to God, from whom we have backslidden. The apostle calls it, *sorrowing after a godly sort* ; and speaks of it as attended with *carefulness*, that we may avoid it for the future ; *clearing of ourselves*, so that we may either be encouraged to hope that we have not committed the sins which we are ready to charge ourselves with, or, that the guilt thereof is taken away by the atonement that Christ has made for us. It ought also to produce an holy *indignation*, and a kind of *revenge* against sin, as that which has been so prejudicial to us ; as likewise a *fear* of offending ; a *zeal* for the glory of God, whom we have dishonoured ; and a *vehement desire* of those blessings which we have hereby forfeited. This sorrow for sin ought to proceed from an inward loathing and abhorrence of it ; and the degree thereof ought to bear some proportion to its respective aggravations, and the dishonour we have brought to God thereby ; which would be an effectual means to incline us to abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.

This is very agreeable to the nature of the ordinance we are engaged in, since nothing tends more to enhance the vile and heinous nature of sin, than the consideration of its having crucified the Lord of glory ; which is to be the immediate subject of our meditation therein. We read that Christ, in his last sufferings, was *exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*, Matt. xxvi. 38. which could not proceed from the afflictive view that he had of the pains and indignities he was to suffer in his crucifixion ; for that would argue him to have a less degree of holy courage and resolution than some of the martyrs have expressed when they have endured extreme torments, and most ignominious reproaches for his sake : Therefore his sorrow proceeded from the afflictive sense that he had of the guilt of our sins which he bore. If therefore he not only suffered,

but his soul was exceeding sorrowful for our sins; this ought to excite in us the exercise of that grace in this ordinance, in which it is brought to our remembrance.

(3.) We are to hunger and thirst after Christ; which implies in it an ardent desire of having communion with him: Thus the church says, *With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit will I seek thee early*, Isa. xxvi. 9. and the Psalmist compares this to the hunted hart, that is ready to die for thirst, which *pants after the water-brooks*, Psal. xlii. 1. This arises from a deep sense of our need of Christ, and farther supplies of grace from him, and is attended with a firm resolution that nothing short of him shall satisfy us, as not being adapted to supply our wants. Such a frame of spirit is agreeable to the ordinance we are engaged in, since Christ is therein represented as having purchased, and being ready to apply to his people, those blessings which are of a satisfying and comforting nature.

(4.) We are to feed on Christ by faith, and thereby receive of his fulness, as he is frequently represented in scripture, under the metaphor of *food*: Thus he styles himself, *The bread of life*, John vi. 35. and the blessings he bestows, are called, 'The meat which perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life,' ver. 27. and the gospel-dispensation is set forth by a 'feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined,' Isa. xxv. 6. Thus our Saviour also represents it in the parable, Matt. xxii. 4. in which he commands his servants to invite those that were bidden to the marriage-feast, by telling them what things he had prepared for their entertainment, as an encouragement to their faith. Thus we are to consider that fulness of grace that is in Christ, (when drawing nigh to him in this ordinance,) of merit, for our justification, of strength to enable us to mortify sin, and resist temptations, of wisdom to direct us in all emergencies and difficulties, of peace and comfort, to revive and encourage us under all our doubts and fears, and to give us suitable relief when we are ready to faint under the burdens we complain of. All these blessings are to be apprehended and applied by faith, otherwise we cannot conclude that they belong to us; and nothing can be more adapted to this ordinance, wherein Christ is represented as having all those blessings to bestow, which he has purchased by his blood, and these are signified or shewed forth therein.

(5.) We are, in this ordinance, to trust in the merits of Christ, or to exercise an entire confidence in him, who, by his death, has purchased for us all spiritual and saving blessings. This ought to be attended with an humble sense of our own unworthiness, as being *less than the least of all God's mer-*

cies, Gen. xxxii. 10. and as deserving nothing but his fierce wrath for our iniquities. And, since he has paid a full and satisfactory price of redemption for us, and thereby procured the blessings that we had forfeited, which have a tendency to make us completely happy, we ought to lay the whole stress of our salvation on him, as being sensible that *he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him*, Heb. xii. 25.

(6.) We are to rejoice in Christ's love, which is infinitely greater than what can be in the heart of one creature towards another: This love of Christ has several properties;

1st, It doth not consist merely in his desiring our good, or wishing that we were happy, but in making us so; nor does it only consist in his sympathizing with us in our miseries, but delivering us from them, and discovering himself as our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2dly, As Christ's love to his people did not take its motive at first from any beauty or excellency which he found in them who were deformed, polluted, and worthy to be abhorred by him, but afterwards adorned and *made comely through his comeliness put upon them*, Ezek. xvi. 14. so when they forfeit his love by their frequent backslidings, and deserve to be cast off by him, it is nevertheless unchangeably fixed upon them, inasmuch as *having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end*, John xiii. 1.

3dly, Christ's love is infinitely condescending, which arises not only from that infinite distance which there is between him and his people, but from his remembering them in their low estate, having compassion on them whom no eye pitied, and saving them when they were in the utmost depths of despair and misery, *saying to them when they were in their blood, live*, Ezek. xvi. 6.

4thly, It is not like the love of strangers, which contents itself with some general endeavours to do good to them whom they design not to contract an intimacy with, but it is attended with the highest acts of friendship and communion; imparting his secrets to them, as he promises *to love, and manifest himself to them*, John xiv. 21. and tells his disciples, 'Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: But I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you,' chap. xv. 15.

5thly, It is such a love as forgives all former injuries, and upbraids not his people for what they have done against him, either before or since they believed in him. Thus God is said to 'pardon the iniquity, and pass by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage,' and 'to cast all their sins into the

‘depths of the sea,’ Micah vii. 18, 19. and ‘to blot out their transgressions for his own sake, and not to remember their sins,’ Isa. xliii. 25.

6thly, It is such a love as affords us all seasonable and necessary help in times of our greatest straits and difficulties, Psal. xlv. 1. and makes provision for our future necessities; as he tells his disciples, *I go to prepare a place for you*, John xiv. 2. that they might be assured of being happy in another world; and accordingly he expresses himself in his mediatorial prayer, ‘Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory,’ John xvii. 24.

7thly, It is such a love, as puts him upon reckoning all injuries done against his people, as though they were done against himself, and the kindnesses expressed to them, as though they were expressed to him, as it is said, *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye*, Zech. ii. 8. and, *he that despiseth you, despiseth me*, Luke x. 16. And, when he takes notice of those expressions of kindness, which his people had shewn to one another, he says, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*, Mat. xxv. 40.

8thly, It is such a love as inclines him to interpose himself between his people and all danger, whereby he prevents their being overcome by their enemies; and indeed, he not only hazarded, but as *a good shepherd gave his life for his sheep*, John x. 11.

This is that love which is to be the subject of our meditation in this ordinance; accordingly we are first to endeavour, to make out our interest in him, by faith, which will be evinced by those acts of love to him that flow from it, and then we may rejoice in it as a constant spring of peace and blessedness.

(7.) The next grace to be exercised in this ordinance, is thankfulness, adoring and praising him that he has been pleased to extend compassion to us in bestowing those blessings, which are the result of his discriminating grace, the instances whereof are various, viz. as he delivers us from the ruin that sin would have inevitably brought upon us, prevents us with the blessings of goodness, and restrains the breaking forth of our corruptions, which would otherwise have inclined us to commit the vilest abominations; and, more especially, as he renews our nature, changes our hearts, creates us unto good works, and then quickens and excites that grace in us which his own hand wrought, and comforts us when our spirits are overwhelmed with sorrow, whereby he enables us to go on in his way rejoicing, and so carries on the work which he has begun

in us, till it be completed in glory. There is nothing that we have, either in hand or hope, but what will afford matter for the exercise of this grace; and more particularly, our hearts ought to be excited hereunto from the consideration of the benefits that are signified in this ordinance; especially if we are enabled to receive them by faith.

(8.) We are, at the Lord's supper, to renew our covenant with God. That this may be rightly understood, we must consider what it is for a believer to enter into covenant with God, which he is supposed to have done before this; and that consists not in our promising that we will do these things that are out of our power, or, that we will exercise those graces, which none but God, who works in his people, both to will and to do, can enable us to put forth; but it consists in our making a surrender of ourselves to Christ, and depending on him for the supply of all our spiritual wants, humbly hoping and trusting that he will enable us to adhere stedfastly to him, working in us all that grace which he requires of us; which blessing if he is pleased to grant us, we shall be enabled to perform all the duties that are incumbent on us, how difficult soever they may be. This is an unexceptionable way of entering into covenant with God, as it contains an acknowledgment of our own inability to do that which is good without him, and desire to give the glory of all to him; on whom we stedfastly rely, that we may obtain mercy from him to be faithful.

Moreover, to renew our covenant, is to declare, that through his grace, we are inclined stedfastly to adhere to our solemn dedication to him, not, in the least, repenting of what we did therein; and, that we have as much reason to depend on his assistance now, as we had at first, since grace is carried on, as well as begun by him alone; and accordingly, while we express our earnest desire to be steadfast in his covenant, we depend on his promise that he will never fail us, nor forsake us: And we take this occasion, more especially, to renew our dedication to him, as it is very agreeable to the nature of this ordinance, in which we have the external symbols of his love to us, which lays us under the highest obligation thereunto.

(9.) We are, in this ordinance, to shew our readiness to exercise a Christian love to all saints; which consists, more especially, in our earnest desire that all grace and peace may abound in them, as in our own souls; that hereby we may have occasion to glorify God together, and shew our mutual concern for the spiritual welfare of each other. We are to bless God for the grace they are enabled to exercise, though, it may be, we cannot exercise it in the same degree ourselves: And, as for others, we are to sympathize with them in their



weaknesses, grieve for their falls and miscarriages; and be very ready to make abatements for those frailties and infirmities that we behold in them, which we ourselves are sometimes liable to, especially if they are not inconsistent with grace, in which case we should cast a mantle of love over them, not knowing but we may be exposed to, and fall by the same temptations.

This love is to be expressed, more especially in this ordinance; inasmuch as we are to consider all saints as members of Christ's mystical body, children of the same God and Father, partakers of the same grace with us, fellow travellers to the same heavenly country, where we hope to meet with them at last, though now they are liable to the same difficulties with ourselves, and exposed to those assaults and temptations that we often meet with from our spiritual enemies. This expression of our love, though it be more immediately and directly extended to the same society, that joins in communion with us; yet it is not to be confined within such narrow limits, but includes in it the highest esteem for all who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, though their place of abode be remote from, and they are not known to us in the flesh.

II. We are now to consider the duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper; and that consists in enquiring, how they have behaved themselves therein? and, whether they have any ground to conclude, that they have been favoured with the special presence of God in this ordinance, whereby it has been made a means of grace to them?

As to the former of these enquiries relating to the frame of our spirits, while engaging in this solemn duty, we shall sometimes find, that it has been such as affords matter for deep humiliation and self-abasement, in the sight of God, when we reflect upon it; particularly,

1. When our minds and affections have been conversant about those things, which are altogether unsuitable to the work we have been engaged in, and, instead of conversing with Christ in this ordinance, we have had our thoughts and meditations most taken up with worldly matters; or, if they have, indeed, been conversant about religious affairs, yet we may, in some measure, see reason to blame ourselves, if these have been altogether foreign to the great end and design of the ordinance we have been engaged in. There are many portions of scripture, or heads of divinity founded upon it, which we may employ our thoughts about at other times, with great advantage; yet they may not be altogether suitable, or adapted to our receiving spiritual advantage by, or making a right

improvement of Christ crucified, as the nature of this ordinance requires.

2. They behave themselves unbecomingly, in this ordinance, who meditate on the thing signified therein, to wit, the dying love of Jesus Christ, as though they were unconcerned spectators, having only an historical faith, and content themselves with the bare knowledge of what relates to the life and death of Christ, without considering the end and design thereof, viz. that he might make atonement for sin, or their particular concern herein, so as to improve it, as an expedient for the taking away the guilt and power thereof in their own souls.

3. We may reflect on our behaviour in this ordinance, when we have given way to deadness and stupidity, without using those endeavours that are necessary for the exciting our affections; when a subject so affecting as Christ's pouring out his soul unto death, being wounded for our transgressions, despised and rejected of men, bleeding and dying on the cross, and, in the midst of his sufferings, crying out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*, has not had an efficacy to raise our affections, any more than if it were a common subject?

4. We have reason to blame our behaviour in this ordinance, when we have attended on it with a resolution to continue in any known sin, without being earnest with God to mortify it, or desiring strength and grace from Christ, in order thereunto, and improving his death for that end. Thus we have reason, sometimes, to reflect on our behaviour at the Lord's supper, with grief, and sorrow of heart, as what has been disagreeable to the nature of the ordinance we have been engaged in.

But, on the other hand, we may, sometimes, in taking a view of our behaviour therein, find matter of encouragement, when, abating for human frailties, and the imperfection of grace, that inseparably attends this present state, we can say, to the glory of God, that we have, in some measure, behaved ourselves as we ought to do. Thus when we have found, that our hearts have been duly affected with the love of Christ, and we have had the exercise of those graces that are suitable thereunto; and if we can say, that we have had some communion with him, and have not been altogether destitute of his quickening and comforting presence, and the witness of his Spirit with ours, that we are the children of God; then we may conclude, that we have engaged in this ordinance in a right manner. And if we have found that it has been thus with us, we are to bless God for it, as considering that he alone can excite grace in us, who wrought it at first. And

we are farther to consider, that such-like acts of grace will be a good evidence of the truth and sincerity thereof; whereby our comforts may be more established, and we enabled to walk more closely and thankfully with God, by the communication of those graces that he is pleased to bestow upon us in this ordinance.

Moreover, if we have had experience of the presence of God therein, and have been brought into a good frame, we ought to beg the continuance thereof. The best frame of spirit will be no longer abiding, than it pleases God to keep up the lively exercise of faith and other graces; and this, being so valuable a blessing, is to be sought for by fervent prayer and supplication, that our good frames may not be like the morning cloud, or early dew, that soon passes away: This will discover, that we set a value upon them, and glorify God as the author of them; and it is the best expedient for our walking with God at other times, as well as when engaged in holy ordinances.

Again, it is farther observed, that they, who have been quickened and comforted, when partaking of the Lord's supper, ought to watch against relapses into those sins, that formerly they have been overtaken with, but now see reason to abhor. This we ought to do, because, though we are sometimes brought into a good frame, yet still we have deceitful hearts, that, before we are aware, may betray us into the commission of those sins which have occasioned great distress to us in times past; and, to this we may add, the endeavours of Satan to ensnare us by his wiles; so, that when we think ourselves the safest, we may be exposed to the greatest dangers. When we have been least apprehensive of our return to our former sins, and, it may be, have been too secure in our opinion, while confiding too much to our own strength, we have lost those good frames, and our troubles have been renewed thereby: Therefore, it is our duty to watch against the secret workings of corrupt nature, and the first motions of sin in our hearts, while we earnestly implore help from God, that we may be kept from our own iniquities; namely, those sins that we have formerly committed, or that more easily beset us than any other.

The next duty incumbent on us, after we have received the Lord's supper, is, to fulfil our vows: This will be better understood, if compared with what was before observed concerning sacramental vows or covenants: which ought not to contain in them a making promises, especially in our own strength, that we will be found in the exercise of those graces which are the special gift and effects of God's almighty power. Therefore, I always, when occasionally mentioning making religious vows,

consider them principally as containing an express declaration, that we are under an indispensable obligation to perform those duties, and put forth those acts of grace which are incumbent on us, as those who desire to approve ourselves Christ's faithful servants, whom he has taken into a covenant-relation with himself. We also declare, that without help from God we can do nothing : This help we implore from him, at the same time when we devote, or give up ourselves to him ; so that we do this, hoping and trusting that he will bestow upon us that grace which is out of our own power ; which, if he will be pleased to do, we determine that he shall have all the glory that arises from it. This is most agreeable to the sense of the Latin word \* ; from whence the word *vow* is derived ; and, I think, it is much rather to be acquiesced in, than that general description which some give of it, when they exhort those who are engaged in this ordinance, first to confess those sins which they have committed since they were last at the Lord's table, so far as they occur to their memories ; and, as a means of their obtaining forgiveness, to make a solemn vow, or promise, that they will abstain from them for the future, and walk more agreeably to the engagements which they are laid under : This they do without an humble sense of the treachery of their own hearts, or their need of strength from God, to perform any thing that is good ; and afterwards, they are as little inclined to fulfil their own promises, as they were before forward to make them, with too much reliance on their own strength ; and, by this means, they bring themselves into the greatest perplexities, and go on, as it were, in a round of making solemn vows and resolutions, and then breaking them, and afterwards renewing them again : Whereas, when we intend nothing by our vowing, but a confessing that what others promise in their own strength, we see ourselves obliged to do ; and, at the same time, depend on Christ for strength to enable us to perform it, and give up ourselves to him, as his covenant-people, in hope thereof ; this is the safest way of vowing, inasmuch as it redounds most to the honour of God, and contains every thing in it that may put us upon using our utmost endeavours to perform the duties that are incumbent on us, and, at the same time, we express our unfeigned desire to glorify him as the God and Author of that grace, which is necessary thereunto. And, in this sense I would understand what we are exhorted to in the answers we are explaining, when it is said, in one of them, that while we are receiving the Lord's supper, we ought to renew our covenant with God ; and after we have received it, we are to fulfil our vows, as it is expressed in the other ; as the former includes in it such a dedication to God as has been but

now considered; the latter, to wit, the fulfilling our vows, implies in it a doing every thing that is in our power, in order thereunto; and, at the same time, a waiting on God to give success to our endeavours, and to work in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, without which we can do nothing.

After we have waited on the Lord in this ordinance, we are to encourage ourselves to a frequent attendance thereon; especially if we have ground to conclude, that we have had any sensible communications of his grace vouchsafed to us therein. As this is an honour which God puts on his own institutions, it is certainly an encouragement to us, to persevere in waiting on him therein. Thus the Psalmist says, *Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live*, Psal. cxvi. 2. This will effectually remove all those doubts and scruples that discourage us from engaging in this ordinance, lest we should not behave ourselves in a right manner therein, fearing that we are not sufficiently prepared for it, and therefore shall be disowned by Christ, when we engage in it: I say, this we are fenced against, by having experienced his quickening and comforting presence therein.

But, suppose we have not met with this desirable blessing, which the best believers do not experience in a like degree, at all times; then we ought, after we have received the Lord's Supper, to endeavour to find out the particular cause of God's withdrawing his special presence from us, and what is that root of bitterness which springs up and troubles us. It may be, he withholds this privilege from us in a way of sovereignty, that we may hereby learn that our comforts are not at our own disposal; or, that they are not the necessary result of our attendance on ordinances, but arise from the divine blessing accompanying them. This, God, it may be, withholds from us for the trial of our graces; and that we may see how needful it is for us to wait for those spiritual comforts, which, at present, he withholds from us; as the prophet says, *Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are they that wait for him*, Isa. xxx. 18.

But since we may, for the most part, apprehend some particular reason why God denies us his quickening, and comforting presence, arising from sins of omission or commission, antecedent to, or whilst we have been engaged in this ordinance: We must enquire,

(1.) Whether there has not been some defect, as to preparatory duties? and particularly, whether we have duly examined ourselves before we came to the Lord's table, concerning our

knowledge of Christ, and the benefits of his redemption ; or, especially, of our being enabled to improve them by faith ? and, whether we have examined ourselves concerning the sense we have of the guilt of sin, and the need we stand in of Christ's righteousness, to take it away, and accordingly resolved to wait on him in this ordinance, with earnest desires of obtaining this privilege.

(2.) We must enquire, whether our behaviour when we have been engaged in this ordinance, has not been, in some measure, unbecoming the spirituality and importance thereof ? whether we have not spared, or indulged, some secret corruption, that has broke forth therein ? or, whether we have not given way to some temptation, that has then beset us ? whether we have not depended on our own righteousness, for the taking away the guilt of sin, and procuring for us acceptance in the sight of God ? or, whether we have not engaged in this ordinance, in our own strength, and by this self-confidence, provoked him to withdraw from us ; which, if we have, it will afford matter of deep humiliation in his sight, and call for repentance and reformation, if we would be fenced against this inconvenience, which, at present we labour under ; and then we may hope that we shall be enabled to wait on him in this ordinance, in such a way, that we may have those comfortable experiences of grace from him, which will be an evidence that we have waited on him for the better, and not for the worse.

**QUEST. CLXXVI.** *Wherein do the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper agree ?*

**ANSW.** The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, agree, in that the author of both is God, the spiritual part of both is Christ and his benefits ; both are seals of the same covenant, are to be dispensed by ministers of the gospel, and by none other, and to be continued in the church of Christ, until his second coming.

**QUEST. CLXXVII.** *Wherein do the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ ?*

**ANSW.** The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration, and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants, whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and



growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

**T**HESE two answers contain little more than a recapitulation of some things, that have been occasionally mentioned, in explaining the nature of these ordinances; and therefore we shall very briefly insist on them.

I. Concerning those things wherein the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper agree; accordingly,

1. It is observed, that God is the Author of both. This may be inferred from what has been said concerning their being holy ordinances, or means of grace; in which we are to expect his presence and blessing to make them effectual to salvation: This we cannot do without engaging in them by his own warrant, which he has been pleased to give us, as appears from his word, and the experience of many believers, who have found sensible advantage thereby; so that the effects of his power and grace, that have been produced in their hearts, when engaged therein, afford a convincing evidence that God is the Author thereof. This, as to what concerns baptism, respects more especially, the baptism of those that are adult; for when infants are baptized, though God can, and sometimes does, as is more than probable, own this ordinance, by regenerating them at that time; yet this cannot be known by us, unless it be inferred, from those extraordinary communications of grace which they may experience, who are enabled, by faith to give up their children to God therein.

2. Baptism and the Lord's supper farther agree, in that Christ, and his benefits are signified by both of them: for they are, each of them, ordinances for our faith, as they are signs and seals of the covenant of grace, in which Christ, and the benefits of his redemption, are set forth: Thus the apostle says, with respect to baptism, *So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death, buried with him by baptism into death*, Rom. vi. 3, 4. accordingly we have communion with Christ as crucified, dying and buried, and, after this, rising again from the dead, whereby he brought the work of redemption to perfection: These things are signified; and thus our faith is to make use of this sign in baptism; and the apostle says the same thing with respect to the Lord's Supper: *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*, 1 Cor. xi. 26.

3. Baptism and the Lord's supper, are farther observed to agree, in that they are to be dispensed by none but the ministers of the gospel. Under the Old Testament-dispensation, where all the parts of the temple-service were significant signs of Christ, and the benefits of the covenant of grace; these were

to be administered by none but those who were qualified, called, and lawfully set apart to that work, as the apostle says, *No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*, Heb. v. 4. And we may conclude, that the moral reason of the thing extends itself to the administration of the seals of the covenant, under the gospel-dispensation. It is certain, that some must be appointed, or set apart to this work, otherwise it would belong to every body, and consequently there would be no determinate administrators of these ordinances, who might be said to have a special call thereunto, from God and man. It may also be inferred from those scriptures that speak of *pastors after God's own heart*, who are to *feed his people with knowledge and understanding*, as being his special gift, Jer. iii. 15. and from what the apostle says, concerning gospel-ministers, whether extraordinary or ordinary, as being Christ's gift, when he *ascended up on high*, Eph. iv. 8, 11.

4. It is farther observed, that these two ordinances agree, in that they are both to be continued in the church, until Christ's second coming. Though we look and hope for more of the presence of God therein, and a greater effusion of his Spirit, to make them more effectual, and render the church more bright and glorious, as being favoured with greater degrees of the communications of divine grace; yet we have no ground to expect new ordinances, or a new dispensation to succeed this we are under, till Christ's second and most glorious coming; therefore this is called, *The last time*, 1 John ii. 18. Upon which account the apostle says, that *the ends of the world are come upon us*, 1 Cor. x. 11. by which we are to understand, that the present dispensation of the gospel that we are under, is the last we are to expect till Christ's second coming.

And this also appears, from the promise which Christ has given of his presence with his ministers and churches, when faithfully engaging in these ordinances, as he says, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20. And, as his *death*, as was before observed, is to be *shewed forth till he come*, 1 Cor. xi. 26. this proves that the Lord's supper is also to be continued in the church till then. This I would the rather observe, inasmuch as it is contrary to what some maintain, who, while they hope for a greater effusion of the Spirit, and a more glorious state of the church in the latter day, are ready to extend their thoughts too far, they conclude that it will be a new dispensation, as the ordinances which the church is favoured with, at present, shall cease, particularly baptism and the Lord's Supper; which we can by no means approve of.

II. We are now to consider wherein the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ.

1. It is observed that they differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once ; whereas, the Lord's supper is to be administered often. This appears from two different circumstances contained in them. As for baptism, it signifies our first ingrafting into, or putting on Christ ; and when denominated from the thing signified thereby, it is called, the *washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Titus iii. 5. which is hoped for in this ordinance ; accordingly it is considered as our first solemn dedication to Christ ; and, as this is signified thereby, it is called an initiating ordinance, in which we are bound to be the Lord's ; which bond holds good as long as we live, and therefore needs not to be signified, sealed, or confirmed by our being baptized a second time : But, on the other hand, the Lord's supper signifies our feeding or living upon Christ, and receiving daily supplies of grace from him, as our necessities require : Therefore this ordinance differs from baptism as it is often to be engaged in.

2. They differ, in that the former as has been before proved, is not only to be applied to the adult, if they have not been baptized before, but to the infants of believing parents, which the Lord's supper is not. In baptism, the person dedicated may be considered as being passive, and so devoted to God by the faith of another, who has a right to do this : But none are to partake of the Lord's supper but those who have such a degree of knowledge, that they are able to discern the Lord's body, and capable of performing that duty which the apostle recommends as necessary thereunto, when he says, *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*, 1 Cor. xi. 28.

I am sensible that some of the ancient church, and particularly Cyprian, in the third century, have pleaded for, and practised the administration of the Lord's supper to infants, being led into this mistake, by supposing what does not sufficiently appear, *viz.* that infants among the Jews ate the passover, because whole families are said to eat it. But this does not appear to include infants ; for whom another sort of food was designed : neither could they reap any advantage by it, not being capable of discerning the thing signified, or feeding on Christ, the true Paschal Lamb ; which could be done no otherwise than by faith.

Others were led into this mistake from the wrong sense they gave of that scripture, in which Christ says, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*, John vi. 53. thinking that our Saviour meant hereby, the bread and wine in the Lord's supper. Therefore this ordi-

nance was absolutely necessary to salvation; upon which account they thought that it ought to be extended to infants, as a means of their obtaining it. But it is certain this cannot be the meaning of that scripture, since the Lord's supper was not instituted, or known in the church, when our Saviour spake these words: Therefore, he intends nothing else thereby but the fiducial application of Christ's death, as an expedient for our obtaining eternal life.

QUEST. CLXXVIII. *Which is Prayer?*

ANSW. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

**H**AVING considered the things that are to be believed and done; what remains is, to enquire concerning those things that are to be prayed for, and how this great duty of prayer is to be performed. This is necessary to be insisted on, inasmuch as we are obliged to yield obedience to the revealed will of God; nevertheless, by reason of our depravity and weakness, we can do nothing that is good without his assistance, which is not to be expected, unless it be humbly desired of him; and this is what we generally call *prayer*; which being performed by creatures who are not only indigent, but unworthy, this is to be acknowledged, and accordingly we are, in prayer, to confess sin as the principal ground and reason of this unworthiness. And, inasmuch as God has been pleased to encourage us to hope, that we shall not seek his face in vain, who, in many instances is pleased to grant returns of prayer; this obliges us to draw nigh to him with thanksgiving. These things are particularly contained in the answer we are explaining; and the method in which we shall endeavour to speak to it, is to consider,

I. What, prayer supposes; and that is,

1. That we are dependent and indigent creatures, have many wants to be supplied, sins to be forgiven, miseries, under which we need pity and relief, and weaknesses, under which we want to be strengthened and assisted in the performance of the duties that are incumbent on us. From hence it may be inferred, that though our Lord Jesus Christ is often represented as praying to God, this is an action performed by him in his human nature; in which alone he could be said to be indigent, who, in his divine nature, is all-sufficient.

2. It supposes that God, who is the object of prayer, is regarded by us, not only as able, but willing to help us; and

that he has encouraged us to draw nigh to him for relief : And therefore it is a duty that more especially belongs to those who are favoured with the hope of the gospel.

II. We shall now shew how prayer is to be considered, as to the various kinds hereof ; and accordingly we are represented as drawing nigh to God, with an humble sense of our secret sins and wants, which none but God and our own consciences are privy to. This kind of prayer our Saviour intends, when he says, *Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly*, Mat. vi. 6. and we have an instance hereof in himself ; inasmuch, as it is said, that *when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray*, chap. xiv. 23. also, *Peter went up upon the house-top to pray*, Acts x. 9. in which, being retired from the world, he had a greater liberty to pour forth his soul unto God.

Moreover, we are to join with others in performing this duty, in which we confess those sins, and implore a supply of those wants that are common to all who are engaged therein : This our Saviour encourages us to do, when he says, *If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Mat. xviii. 19, 20. This is a branch of social worship, and is to be performed by every family apart, whereof we have an example in Cornelius, concerning whom it is said, that *he was a devout man, and feared God with all his house, and prayed to him always ; and that he did this, at certain times, in his house*, Acts x. 2. compared with ver. 30. Moreover, this duty is to be performed publicly in the church, or any worshipping assembly met together for that purpose : Of this we have an instance in the apostle Paul, who, when he had called for the elders of the church at Ephesus, designing to take his leave of them, after an affectionate discourse, and suitable advice given to them, he *kneeled down and prayed with them all*, chap. xx. 36.

Again, prayer may be considered as that for which a stated time is set apart by us, either alone, or with others ; or, that which is occasional, short, and ejaculatory, consisting in a secret lifting up of our hearts to God, and may be done when we are engaged in other business of a different nature, without being a let or hindrance to it : Thus it is said that *Nehemiah prayed*, when he has going to *deliver the cup into the king's hand*, between the king's asking him a question, and his returning him an answer to it ; which seems to be the meaning of what is said in Neh. ii. 4, 5. *Then the king said unto me ; for*

*what dost thou make request? so I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king, &c.* These ejaculatory prayers are either such as we put up to God while engaged in worldly business for direction, assistance, or success therein; or when attending on the word read or preached, or any other holy duties, in which we lift up our hearts to him for his presence therein.

III. The next thing to be considered, is, the various parts of prayer; and these are three, *viz.* Confession of sin; petition for a supply of our wants; and thanksgiving for mercies received. Confession of sin supposes that we are guilty, and deserve punishment from God; petition supposes, that we are miserable and helpless; and thanksgiving implies, a disposition to own God, the author of all the good we enjoy or hope for, and includes in it a due sense of those undeserved favours we have received from him.

From this general account of the duty of prayer, and the parts thereof, we may infer,

1. That the two former of them, namely, confession of sin, and petition for relief, under the various miseries and distresses which we are liable to, is only applicable to those who are in a sinful and imperfect state, as believers are in this world. As for glorified saints in heaven, they have no sins to be confessed, nor any miseries under which they need help and pity. As for that part of prayer which consists of thanksgiving for mercies already received, that, indeed, is agreeable to a perfect state, and is represented as the constant work of glorified saints: Thus the Psalmist says, *The heavens, that is, the inhabitants thereof, shall praise thy wonders, O Lord, thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints*, Psal. lxxxix. 5.

2. Sinners, who have lost their day of grace, against whom the door of hope and mercy is shut, who are enduring the punishment of sin in hell, these are not properly the subjects of prayer; concerning whom it may be said, not only that they cannot pray, being destitute of those graces that are necessary thereunto; but having no interest in a Mediator, or in the promises of the covenant of grace, which are a warrant and encouragement for the performance of this duty.

3. In this world, wherein we enjoy the means of grace, none are the subjects of prayer but man. The Psalmist, indeed, speaks of God's *giving to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry*, Psal. cxlvii. 9. and elsewhere it is said, *He provideth for the raven his food, when his young ones cry unto God*, Job. xxxviii. 41. The meaning of which is, not that brute creatures formally address themselves to God for a supply of their wants, having no idea of a divine being; but, that, when they complain for want of food, the providence of God



supplies them, though they know not the hand from whence it comes.

4. Though it be the duty of all men in the world to pray : yet none can do this by faith, and, consequently, in an acceptable manner, but believers, concerning whom the apostle says, *Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15.

As for the first part of prayer, viz. petition, or supplication. This will be particularly considered under several following answers, and especially those that contain an explication of the Lord's prayer ; which is a directory for what we are to ask of God : Therefore we shall, at present, only consider the other two parts of prayer, viz. confession of sin, and thanksgiving for mercies.

(1.) Concerning confession of sin ; and accordingly,

[1.] We shall prove, that it is an indispensable duty incumbent on all men ; and that, not only on those who are in a state of unregeneracy, and consequently under the dominion of sin, but on believers themselves, who are in a justified state. This will appear, if we consider, that not to confess sin, is, in effect, to justify ourselves in the commission of it ; and, as it were, to deny that which is so well known to the heart-searching God, as well as to our own consciences. It also contains in it a charging God with injustice, when he inflicts on us the punishment that is due to it ; which is contrary to what Ezra says ; *Thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve*, Ezra ix. 13.

Moreover, none was ever truly humbled in the sight of God, or obtained mercy and forgiveness of sin, but he was first brought to confess it with suitable affection, and brokenness of heart ; which are ingredients in true repentance : Thus it is said, *He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not ; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light*, Job xxxiii. 27, 28. It is also said elsewhere, *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper : But whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*, Prov. xxviii. 13. This duty is so evident, that, one would think, no one, who duly considers what he is, or how contrary his actions are to the revealed will of God, should have the front to deny it : However, it is well known, that many seem designedly to wave all confession of sin in prayer ; and, others argue against it, more especially, as to what concerns the case of believers : Accordingly,

*Object.* It is objected, that believers ought not to confess sin ; since that is inconsistent with a justified state : It is, in effect, to plead guilty, though God has taken away the guilt of

sin, by forgiving it for the sake of the atonement which Christ has made: It is a laying open the wound that God hath healed and closed up, or bringing to remembrance that which he hath said, *he will remember no more*, Heb. x. 67. and it is contrary to the grace of God, who hath said, none shall *lay any thing to the charge of his elect*, since it is *God that justifieth*, Rom. viii. 33. for a believer to lay any thing to his own charge, which he does when he confesses sin.

*Ans.* To this it may be replied;

1st, That we must distinguish between a believer's desert of punishment or condemnation, and his being actually punished by God, as a sin-revenging judge, according as his iniquities deserve. That a believer shall not eventually fall under condemnation, is true, because his sins are forgiven; and with respect to such, the apostle says, *There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, ver. 1. Nevertheless, though he be in a justified state, and, as the consequence hereof, shall be undoubtedly saved; yet, according to the tenor of his own actions, he being a sinner, contracts guilt in the sight of God; and, a desert of punishment is inseparably connected with every sin, though a person may be in a justified state who commits it. It is one thing to be liable to condemnation, and another thing to deserve to be condemned: The former of these is, indeed, inconsistent with a justified state; but the latter is not: And it is in this sense that we are to understand the Psalmist's words, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand*, Psal. cxxx. 3. And, accordingly, the best believer on earth, though he have a full assurance of his being forgiven by God; yet, inasmuch as he is a sinner, he is obliged to confess that he deserves to be cast off by him, or, if God should deal with him according to what he finds in him, without looking upon him as he is in Christ, his head and surety, he would be undone and lost for ever.

2dly, Believers are daily sinning, and therefore contracting fresh guilt; as it is said, *There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not*, Eccl. vii. 20. and, indeed their sin is sometimes so great, that they grieve the Holy Spirit, wound their own consciences, and act very disagreeably to their character as believers. This therefore ought to be confessed with shame and self-abhorrence; as the prophet says, *That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame; when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God*, Ezek. xvi. 63. Moreover, it is certain that believers, when they have had a discovery that their sin was pardoned, have, at the same time, confessed it with great humility. Thus, immediately after Nathan had reproved David for his sin, and told him,

upon his repentance, that *the Lord had put it away*, 2 Sam. xii. 13. yet he makes a penitent confession of it before God, and says, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*, Psal. li. 4.

[2.] We shall now consider with what frame of spirit sin is to be confessed; and this ought to be done,

1st, With a due sense of the infinite evil thereof, as it reflects dishonour on the divine perfections; and particularly as it is opposite to the holiness and purity of God, and a contempt cast on his law, which expressly forbids it, and a disregarding the threatenings denounced thereby against those who violate it, and renders us liable to his wrath, as a sin-revenging Judge, pursuant to the intrinsic demerit thereof: And therefore it is justly styled *an evil thing and bitter*; the only thing that can be called a moral evil; and it is certainly bitter in the consequences thereof.

2dly, We are to confess sin with humility, shame, confusion of face, and self-abhorrence; and that more especially, by reason of the vile ingratitude there is in it, as committed by those who are under the greatest engagements to the contrary duties.

3dly, Sin is to be confessed with the hope of obtaining forgiveness through the blood of Christ, as laying hold on the promises of mercy, which are made to those who confess and forsake it, Prov. xxviii. 13. and, with an earnest desire, to be delivered from the prevailing power thereof, by strength derived from Christ.

[3.] We shall now consider what sins we are to confess before God; and these are, either the sin of our nature, or those actual transgressions that proceed from it.

1st, The sin of our nature. As fallen creatures, we are destitute of the image of God; and, having contracted corrupt habits, by repeated acts of rebellion against him, all the powers and faculties of our souls are vitiated thereby, and we not only indisposed and disinclined to what is good, but naturally bent to backslide from God, and to commit the greatest abominations, if destitute of his preventing, restraining, or renewing grace: Thus the apostle says, *I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing*, Rom. vii. 18. And this is to be considered as what has universally defiled and depraved our nature; and therefore we ought to cry out with the leper, *Unclean, unclean*, Lev. xiii. 45. or, as the prophet says, *From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores*, Isa. i. 6. We are to consider it as that which insinuates itself into our best duties; and it is like the fly in the precious ointment; and it is of such a nature, that when we have been enabled to gain some

advantage against it, it will afterwards recover strength. Notwithstanding all our endeavours to the contrary. It is like an incurable disease in the body, which, though we endeavour to keep it under for a while, yet it will prevail again, till the frame of nature is demolished, and thereby all diseases cured at once : Nevertheless, when we confess and are humbled for this propensity, that is in our nature to sin, we are to pray and hope, that the prevailing power thereof may be so far weakened, that, by the principle of grace, implanted in regeneration, and excited by the Spirit, in promoting the work of sanctification, though it dwells in us it may not entirely have dominion over us, or we be thereby denominated the servants of sin.

*2dly,* We are to confess the many actual sins that we daily commit, with all their respective aggravations ; sins of omission and commission, both of which are contained in the apostle's confession ; *The good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do,* Rom. vii. 19. Our sinful neglects of duty are numberless ; we are to confess our not having redeemed our time, but spent it in those trifles and vain amusements that profit not ; particularly if we have misimproved the very flower and best part of our time and strength, and not remembered our Creator in the days of our youth. This Job reckons the principal ground and reason of the evils that befall him in his advanced age, when he says, *Thou writest bitter things against me ; and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth,* Job xiii. 26. And we are humbly to confess our not having improved, and, thereby, lost many opportunities for extraordinary service, either to do, or to get good : Thus the prophet says, *Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the Lord,* Jer. viii. 7. We are also to confess our neglecting to comply with the calls and invitations of the gospel ; upon which account we are said, *to receive the grace of God in vain,* 2 Cor. vi. 1. or *not to know the time of our visitation,* Luke xix. 44. but when God has called, *we have refused ; when he has stretched out his hand, no man regarded, but have set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproof,* Prov. i. 24, 25. We are also to confess our neglect of public and secret duties, or worshipping of God in a careless indifferent manner ; as the prophet represents the people, saying, *Behold, what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts ; and ye have brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick ; should I accept this at your hands ?* Mal. i. 13. We are also to confess our neglect of relative duties, in not instructing those under our care, nor reproving them for sin committed, nor sympathizing with the afflicted, nor warning those who are going out of God's way ; by which

means a multitude of sins might have been prevented, whereby many have been ruined through our sinful neglect.

As for sins of commission, which are also to be confessed; these are either such as were committed before or after our conversion to God; the former of which contain a disowning his authority, or right to obedience; the latter, an ungrateful disregard to, or forgetfulness of the greatest benefits received from him. We are also to confess those sins which are contrary to the moral law, or the very light of nature; which we are often guilty of: And, that we may be furnished with matter, and give scope to our thoughts and affections therein, it may be of use for us to consider the sins forbidden under each of the Ten Commandments, which have been before particularly insisted on. We ought also to confess the various aggravations of sin; and, to assist us therein, those things that are contained in a foregoing answer \*, may be of some use to us, especially if we make a particular application thereof to our own case, and observe how far we have reason to fall under a sense of guilt, or charge ourselves with crimes of the like nature.

Moreover, we are to confess the sins we have committed against the engagements or grace of the gospel; the low thoughts we have sometimes had of the person of Christ, his love to us, or the benefits we have been made partakers of from him, while we have been ready to say, as the daughters of Jerusalem are represented speaking, *What is thy beloved more than another beloved*, Cant. v. 9. and how much we have hardened our hearts against him, refusing to submit to his yoke, or bear his cross; how often we have been ashamed of his cause and interest, especially when called to suffer reproach for it. Have we not sometimes questioned the truth of his promises, refused to submit to his righteousness, and depend upon it alone for justification, while we have had too high thoughts of ourselves, glorying and valuing ourselves upon the performance of some moral duties, which we have put in the room of Christ?

We ought to confess how much we have opposed him in all his offices; not depending on him as a prophet to lead us in the way of truth and peace, but have leaned to our own understanding, and therefore have been left to pervert, disbelieve, or, at least, entertain some doubts about the great doctrines of the gospel; or, if our minds have been rightly informed therein, yet we have not made a practical improvement thereof, for our spiritual advantage. Have we not opposed him as a priest, and neglected to set a due value on that atonement he has made for sin, not improving his intercession for

\* See Quest. CLI.

us, who is entered into the holy place, made without hands, to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of grace? Have we not also refused to submit to him as king of saints, or seek protection from him against the assaults of our spiritual enemies? These things are to be confessed by us in prayer; and that with such a sense of our own guilt, that we ought to acknowledge ourselves to be, (as the apostle says concerning himself,) *the chief of sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15.

I am sensible that many will be ready to conclude, that much of what has been said concerning sins to be confessed, is applicable to none but those that are in a state of unregeneracy; and, among them, few can say, that they are the chief of sinners, unless they have been notoriously vile and scandalous in the eye of the world; and that the apostle Paul, when he applies this to himself, has a peculiar reference to what he was before his conversion.

But to this it may be replied; that it is impossible we should know so much of the sins of others, together with their respective aggravations, as we may of those that have been committed by ourselves. And if we have not been left to commit those gross and scandalous sins, which we have beheld in them with abhorrence, this is not owing to ourselves, but the grace of God, by which we are what we are; which, if we had been destitute of, we should have been as bad as the worst of men; and if our hearts have been renewed and changed thereby, so that we are kept from committing those sins that are inconsistent with a state of grace; yet there are very heinous aggravations attending those we have reason to charge ourselves with; whereby we have acted contrary to the experience we have had of the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, and have been guilty of very great ingratitude against him, that has laid us under the highest obligations. Thus concerning confession of sin, when drawing nigh to God in the duty of prayer.

(2.) We are now to consider another part of prayer, namely, that we are therein thankfully to acknowledge the mercies of God: Thus the Psalmist says, *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name*, Psal. c. 4. And elsewhere, *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and will call upon the name of the Lord*, Psal. cxvi. 17. that is, I will join prayer and praise together. Nothing is more obvious, than that favours received ought to be acknowledged; otherwise we are guilty of that ingratitude which is one of the vilest crimes. Not to acknowledge what we receive from God, is, in effect, to deny our obligation to him; which will provoke him to withhold from us those other mercies which we stand in need of.

This duty ought to be performed at all times, and on all occasions: Thus the apostle says, *In every thing by prayer and*



*supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God*, Phil. iv. 6. This is evident, in that there is no condition of life but what has some mixture of mercy in it; and that this may be more particularly considered, we may observe, that the mercies we receive from God, are either outward or spiritual, common or special; the former of these he gives to all without distinction; as it is said, *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 9. And elsewhere, he is *kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil*, Luke vi. 35. and *maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*, Matt. v. 45. The latter sort of mercies he bestows on the heirs of salvation, in a covenant-way, as the purchase of the blood of Christ, and a pledge of farther blessings which he has reserved in store for them: There are mercies which we have in hand, or in possession, and others which we have in hope or in reversion: Thus the apostle speaks of the *hope which is laid up for the saints in heaven*, Col. i. 3, 5. which he *thanks* God for in his prayer for the church,

Again, the mercies of God may be considered either as personal or relative; the former we are more immediately the subjects of; the latter affect us so far as we stand related to others, for whose welfare we are greatly concerned, and whose happiness makes a very considerable addition to our own.

[1.] We are to express our thankfulness to God for personal mercies; and accordingly we are to bless him for the advantages of nature, which are the effects of divine goodness: Thus the Psalmist says, *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*, Psal. cxxxix. 14. Though the human nature falls very short of what it was at first, when the image of God was perfectly enstamped on all the powers and faculties of the soul; and it is not what it shall be when brought to a state of perfection in heaven: Yet there are many natural endowments which we have received from God, as a means for our glorifying him, and answering the end of our being, in the whole conduct of our lives: And,

1st, As to what concerns the blessings of providence, which we have received in every age of life. In our childhood and youth we have great reason to be thankful, if we have had the invaluable blessing of a religious education, and have been kept or delivered from the pernicious influence of bad examples, from whence that age of life oftentimes receives such a tincture as tends to vitiate the soul, and open the way for all manner of sin, which will afterwards insinuate itself into, and prevail, like an infectious distemper, over all the powers and faculties thereof. What reason have we to bless God if we have been favoured with restraining or preventing grace, whereby we have been kept from youthful lusts, which are

destructive to multitudes, and lay a foundation for their future ruin ; and especially if it has pleased God to bring us under early convictions of sin ; so that we have experienced in that age of life, the hopeful beginnings of a work of grace, which is an effect of more than common providence ! We ought to take notice, with great thankfulness, of the methods of divine grace, if we have been early led into the knowledge of the first principles of the oracles of God, especially if they have made such an impression on our hearts, that we can say, with good Obadiah, *I thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth,* 1 Kings xviii. 12.

Again, we are to express our thankfulness for the mercies which we have received in our advanced age, when arrived to a state of manhood ; and accordingly are to bless him for directing and ordering our settlement in the world, in those things more especially that relate to our secular callings and employments therein, and the advantages of suitable society in those families in which our lot has been cast, as well as the many instances of divine goodness in our own. We ought also to bless him for succeeding our industry and endeavours used, to promote our comfort and happiness in the world, together with that degree of usefulness which it has pleased God to favour us with, therein. We ought also to bless him for carrying us through many difficulties that lay in our way, some of which we have been almost ready to think insurmountable ; as also for bringing us under the means of grace, in which the providence of God is more remarkable, in those who have not been favoured with a religious education in their childhood ; and more especially if these means have been made effectual to answer the highest and most valuable ends.

There are other mercies which some have reason to bless God for, who are arrived to old age, which is the last stage of life, wherein the frame of nature is declining and hastening apace to a dissolution. These, I say, have reason to be thankful, if they have not, as it were, outlived themselves, wholly lost their memory and judgment, by which means they would have been brought back again, as it were, to the state of childhood, as some have been ; or, if old age be not pressed down beyond measure, with pain and bodily diseases, or a multitude of cares and troubles about outward circumstances in the world, which would tend to embitter the small remains of life, which has not much strength of nature to bear up under great troubles, nor can those methods be made use of, whereby others, without much difficulty, are able to extricate themselves out of them : But they, of all others, have most reason to bless God, who can look back on a long series of usefulness, in proportion to the number of years they have lived ; so that that pro-

wise is fulfilled to them, *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing*, Psal. xcii. 14. This is more than a common mercy, and therefore requires a greater degree of thankfulness, when it may be said of them, *The hoary head is a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness*, Prov. xvi. 31. and grace keeps equal pace with age; and they have nothing to do but to wait for a release, from a careful, vain, uneasy life to heaven. Thus concerning the occasions we have for thankfulness in every age of life.

*2dly*, We are now to consider the reason that we have to be thankful in the various circumstances or conditions of life; particularly,

*1st*, When we have a great measure of outward prosperity, which is more than many enjoy; which calls for a proportionable degree of thankfulness, especially if it be sanctified and sweetened with a sense of God's special love, so that it is a pledge and earnest of better things reserved for us hereafter. When we have the good things of this life for our conveniency, that our passage through the world may be more easy and comfortable to us; and yet we have ground to hope that this is not our portion, or that we are not like those whom the Psalmist speaks of, and calls *the men of the world, who have their portion in this life*, Psal. xvii. 14. or, like the rich man in the parable, to whom it was said, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things*, Luke xvi. 25. We have reason to bless God when outward prosperity is a means of our glorifying him, and being more serviceable to promote his interest, and not a snare or occasion of sin, when it is not like the *prosperity of fools*, which has a tendency to *destroy them*, Prov. i. 32. or when what is said concerning that murmuring generation of men, whom the Psalmist speaks of, that *lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert*: so that though *he gave them their request, he sent leanness into their soul*, is not applicable to us, Psal. cvi. 14, 15. Again, when we enjoy the outward blessings of providence, and, at the same time, live above them; so that our hearts are not too much set upon them; but we are willing to part with them, when God is about to deprive us of them, or take us from them; and when outward enjoyments are helps, and not hindrances to us in our way to heaven. These are inducements to the greatest thankfulness, and ought to be acknowledged to the glory of God.

*2dly*, We have reason to be thankful, though it pleases God to follow us with many afflictions and adverse providences in the world: These are not, indeed, to be reckoned blessings in themselves; nevertheless, they are not inconsistent with a thankful frame of spirit; especially,

1st, When we take occasion from hence to be affected with the vanity, emptiness, and uncertainty of all outward comforts, which perish in the using.

2dly, When afflictive providences have a tendency to humble and make us submissive to the divine will, so that we are hereby led to have a deep sense of sin, the procuring cause thereof. Thus Ephraim speaks of his being chastised by God, and, at the same time, *ashamed and confounded*, as *bearing the reproach* of former sins committed by him, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. or, when those sins, which before prevailed, are hereby prevented, and we enabled to mortify them: Thus the Psalmist says, *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have kept thy word*, Psal. cxix. 67. And when God is pleased to cause his grace to abound as outward troubles abound. 2 Cor. iv. 16. and when the want of outward mercies makes us see the worth of them, and puts us upon improving every instance of the divine goodness, as a great inducement to thankfulness.

3dly, We have reason to be thankful under afflictions, when we have a comfortable hope that they are evidences of our being God's children, interested in his special love, Heb. xii. 7. so that we have ground to conclude, that he is hereby training us up, and making us more meet for the heavenly inheritance, so that we can say with the apostle, *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

[2.] We are to express our thankfulness for those mercies which we call relative, or for the blessings that others enjoy, in whose welfare we are more immediately concerned. As it is the duty of every one to desire the good of all men; so we ought to bless God for the mercies bestowed on others as well as ourselves. The relation we stand in to others, is either more general or extensive, and, in this respect, it may include in it all mankind; and accordingly we are to be thankful for the mercies which our fellow-creatures receive from the hand of God, inasmuch as hereby the divine perfections are magnified: And, as for those who receive the blessings that accompany salvation, the ends of Christ's death, and the dispensation of the gospel, are hereby attained; and whatever mercies God bestows on others, we bless him for them, as taking encouragement to hope that he will bestow the same blessings upon us, when we stand in need of them.

As for those who are related to us in the bonds of nature, or as members of the family to which we belong, for whose welfare we are more immediately concerned, we may, in some measure, reckon the mercies they enjoy, our own, and therefore should be induced to bless God, and be thankful for them, as well as for those which we receive in our persons.—

There is also another relation, which is more large and extensive, namely, that which we stand in to all the members of Christ's mystical body, whom the apostle calls *the household of faith*, Gal. vi. 10. and, as such, supposes them to be entitled to our more special regard: Accordingly we are to express our thankfulness to God, in prayer, for all the mercies they receive, especially those that are of a spiritual nature; inasmuch as herein Christ is glorified, and his interest advanced, which ought to be dearer to us than any thing that relates to our own private or personal interest, as the Psalmist speaks of his preferring Jerusalem's welfare above *his chief joy*, Psal. cxxxvii. 6. And that which farther inclines us to do this, is, because we hope that we shall be made partakers of the same blessings, whereby others will have occasion to bless God on our behalf. Thus concerning the inducements we have to thankfulness for blessings received, either by ourselves or others.

I shall conclude this head by considering, that thankfulness, which ought to be a great ingredient in prayer, is always to be accompanied with the exercise of other graces, whereby we are disposed to adore and magnify the divine perfections that are displayed in the distribution of those favours which we bless him for; together with an humble sense of our own unworthiness of the least of those mercies which we enjoy, and an earnest desire that we may be enabled, not only to do this in words, but to express our thankfulness to him by such a frame of spirit as is agreeable thereto.

There are two things more, contained in the answer we have been explaining, without the due consideration whereof, the duty of prayer would be very imperfectly handled, namely, its being an offering up of our desires to God in the name of Christ, and by the help of the Spirit: But since these are particularly insisted on in some following answers, I have purposely waved the consideration of them at present.

**QUEST. CLXXIX.** *Are we to pray unto God only?*

**ANSW.** God only being able to search the hearts, hear the requests, pardon the sins, and only to be believed in, and worshipped with religious worship, prayer, which is a special part thereof, is to be made by all to him alone, and to none other.

**QUEST. CLXXX.** *What is it to pray in the name of Christ?*

**ANSW.** To pray in the name of Christ is in obedience to his command, and in confidence on his promises to ask mercy

for his sake, not by bare mentioning of his name, but by drawing our encouragement to pray, and our boldness, strength, and hope of acceptance in prayer, from Christ and his mediation.

**QUEST. CLXXXI.** *Why are we to pray in the name of Christ?*

**ANSW.** The sinfulness of man, and his distance from God by reason thereof, being so great as that we can have no access into his presence without a Mediator; and there being none in heaven or earth appointed to, or fit for that glorious work, but Christ alone; we are to pray in no other name but his only.

**I**N these answers we have a farther explication of what is briefly laid down in the last; and that, more especially, as to what respects the object of prayer; and the method prescribed in the gospel, relating to our drawing nigh to God, through a mediator, which is called praying in the name of Christ; together with the reason hereof.

I. It is observed, that prayer is to be made to God alone, and to none other. This appears,

1. Because it is an act of religious worship, which is due to none but God; as our Saviour says, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, Matt. iv. 10.— This can be denied by none who are, in any measure, acquainted either with natural or revealed religion; in which we are obliged to extol, adore, and admire those divine perfections which are displayed in the works of nature and grace, and to seek that help from him, and those supplies of grace that we stand in need of to make us completely blessed, which supposes him to be infinitely perfect and all-sufficient. Now to ascribe this divine glory to a creature, either directly, or by consequence, is, in effect, to say that he is equal with God, and thereby to rob him of that glory that is due to him alone, to seek that from the creature, that none but God can give; or to ascribe any of the perfections of the divine nature to it, is the highest affront that can be offered to the divine Majesty. Now as prayer without adoration and invocation, is destitute of those ingredients which render it an act of religious worship; so to address ourselves, in such a way, to any one but God, is an instance of such profaneness and idolatry, as is not to be mentioned without the greatest detestation.

2. Prayer is to be made only to God, inasmuch as he only is able to search the heart, which is a glory peculiar to himself; in which he is distinguished from all creatures, 1 Kings viii. 39. Acts i. 24. It is the heart that is principally to be regarded in



prayer: If this be not right with God, there is no glory that we can ascribe to him, that will be reckoned any better than *flattering him with our mouth, and lying to him with our tongues*, Psal. lxxviii. 36, 37. as the Psalmist says: Therefore, the inward frame of our spirit, and the principle, or spring from whence all religious duties proceed, being only known to God, prayer is only to be directed to him.

3. He alone can hear our requests, pardon our sins, and fulfil our desires. Prayer, when addressed to God, is not like that in which we desire those favours from men, which are of a lower nature, whereby some particular wants are supplied, in those respects in which one creature may be of advantage to another; but when we pray to God, we seek those blessings which are the effects of infinite power and goodness, such as may make us completely happy, both in this and a better world. Moreover, we are to implore forgiveness of sin from him in prayer; which is a blessing none can bestow but God, Mark ii. 7. for as his law is the rule by which the goodness or badness of actions are determined; and the threatening which he has annexed to it, is that which renders us liable to that punishment sin deserves; so it is he alone that can remit the debt of punishment, which we are liable to, and give us a right and title to forfeited blessings; which being the principal thing that we are to seek for in prayer, this argues that none but God is the object thereof.

4. God alone is to be believed in: Accordingly prayer, if it be acceptable to him, must be performed by faith. Thus the apostle says, *How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed?* Rom. x. 14. There must be a firm persuasion that he can grant us the blessings we ask for; herein faith addresses itself to him as God all-sufficient; and is persuaded that he will fulfil all his promises, as a God of infinite faithfulness; and accordingly we are to give up ourselves entirely to him as our proprietor and bountiful benefactor, the only fountain of blessedness, and object of religious worship: This is to be done by faith in prayer, and consequently it is to be directed to God only.

II. We are now to consider what it is to pray in the name of Christ: This doth not consist barely in a mentioning his name; which many do when they ask for favours for his sake, without a due regard to the method God has ordained; in which we are to draw nigh to him by Christ our great Mediator, who is to be glorified as the person by whom we are to have access to God the Father as the fountain of all the blessings, which are communicated to us in this method of divine grace. To come to God in Christ's name, includes in it the whole work of faith, as to what it has to plead with, or hope for, from him,

through a Mediator, in that way which he has prescribed to us in the gospel. And this more especially consists in our making a right use of what Christ has done and suffered for us, as the foundation of our hope, that God will be pleased to grant us what he has purchased thereby; which contains the sum of all that we can desire, when drawing nigh to him in prayer. Here let it be considered,

1. That the thoughts of having to do with an absolute God, cannot but fill us with the utmost distress and confusion, when we consider ourselves as guilty sinners, and God, out of Christ, as a sin-revenging Judge, a consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29. in which case we may well say, as our first parent did, immediately after his fall, *I heard thy voice and I was afraid*, Gen. iii. 10.

2. God is obliged, in honour, as a God of infinite holiness, to separate and banish sinners from his comfortable presence; they being liable to the curse and condemning sentence of the law; by reason whereof his terror makes them afraid, and his dread falls upon them; nevertheless,

3. They have, in the gospel, not only an invitation to come, but a discovery of that great Mediator, whom God has ordained to conduct his people into his presence, having procured liberty of access to him, or, as the apostle expresses it, *boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*, Heb. x. 19, 20. and he has, for this end, erected a throne of grace, and encouraged us to come to it, and given many great and precious promises, whereby we may hope for acceptance in his sight; these being all established in Christ, and the blessings contained therein procured by his blood, and having liberty, in coming, to plead what he has done and suffered, as what was designed to be the foundation of our hope of obtaining mercy, we are said to come and make our supplications to God in the name of Christ.

III. We are now to consider the reason why we are to pray in the name of Christ; and that we have in one of the answers we are explaining. In which it is observed; that man, by sin, is set at such a distance from God, that he cannot, by any means, come into his presence. God cannot look upon him with any delight or complacency; inasmuch as his guilt renders him the object of his abhorrence; and he cannot do any thing which has a tendency to reconcile God to him, and therefore he is speechless, and can ask for no blessing at his hand. And it is farther observed, that there is none in heaven or earth, that is, no mere creature, that is fit for that glorious work; none has a sufficiency of merit to present to God, whereby he may be said to make atonement for sin; or, as Job

expresses it, there is *no days-man that might lay his hand on both parties*, Job ix. 33. that is, able to deal with God in paying a ransom; which he may, in honour accept of; or with man, by encouraging him to hope that he shall obtain the blessings which he stands in need of; and bringing him into such a frame, that he may draw nigh to God in a right manner. This is only owing to our Lord Jesus Christ; and he does it as our great Mediator, who alone is fit to manage this important work; therefore we are to pray to God, only in his name, who is, by divine appointment, an advocate with the Father, pleading our cause before his throne, and thereby giving us ground of encouragement, that our persons shall be accepted, and our prayers answered upon his account, who is the only Mediator of redemption and intercession, in whom God is well pleased, and gives a believer ground to conclude that he shall not seek his face in vain.

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**QUEST. CLXXXII.** *How doth the Spirit help us to pray?*

**ANSW.** We not knowing what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, by enabling us to understand both for whom, and what, and how prayer is to be made, and by working and quickening in our hearts (although not in all persons, not at all times in the same measure) those apprehensions, affections, and graces, which are requisite for the right performance of that duty.

**QUEST. CLXXXIII.** *For whom are we to pray?*

**ANSW.** We are to pray for the whole church of Christ, upon earth, for magistrates and ministers, for ourselves, our brethren, yea, our enemies, and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter, but not for the dead, nor for those that are known to have sinned the sin unto death.

**QUEST. CLXXXIV.** *For what things are we to pray?*

**ANSW.** We are to pray for all things tending to the glory of God, the welfare of the church, our own, or other's good, but not for any thing that is unlawful.

**A**S there is no duty that we can perform in a right manner, without help obtained from God—And the same may be said, in particular, concerning that of prayer: Accordingly we are led,

I. To speak of the help that the Spirit of God is pleased to

afford believers, in order to their engaging aright in this duty. Here we may observe,

1. That it is supposed that we know not what to pray for as we ought, or how to bring our souls into a prepared frame for this duty, without the Spirit's assistance.

(1.) We are oftentimes at a loss with respect to the matter of prayer; and this may be said to proceed from our being unacquainted with ourselves, and not duly sensible of our wants, weaknesses, or secret faults: Sometimes we cannot determine whether we are in a state of grace or no; or, if we are, whether it is increasing or declining; or, if we have ground to complain by reason of the hidings of God's face, and our want of communion with him, we are oftentimes hard put to it to find out what is that secret sin which is the occasion of it; nor are we sufficiently apprized of the wiles of Satan, or the danger we are in of being ensnared or overcome thereby. Moreover, we are oftentimes not able to know how to direct our prayers to God aright, as we know not what is most conducive to his glory, or what it is that he requires of us, either in obedience to his commanding will, or in submission to his providential will. Hence it arises, that many good men, in scripture, have asked for some things which have been in themselves unlawful, through the weakness of their faith, and the prevalency of their corruption: Thus some have desired, that God would call them out of this world by death, being impatient under the many troubles they met with therein; accordingly we read concerning Elijah, that 'he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers,' 1 Kings xix. 4. and Job says, 'O that I might have my request! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off,' Job vi. 8, 9. And Jonah says, 'O Lord, I beseech thee, take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live,' Jonah iv. 3. And Moses, though he had the character of the meekest man upon earth, and doubtless excelled all others in his day, in those graces which he had received from God, as well as in the great honours conferred on him; yet he puts up a most unbecoming prayer, both as to the matter and manner thereof; as it is observed, that he said unto the Lord, 'Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom (as a nursing-father beareth the sucking child) unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to

‘ give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying.  
 ‘ Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this  
 ‘ people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal  
 ‘ thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have  
 ‘ found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretched-  
 ‘ ness,’ Numb. xi. 11—15. And, in another instance, he asks  
 for a thing which he knew before hand, that God would not  
 grant him, when he says, ‘ I pray thee, let me go over and see  
 ‘ the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain,  
 ‘ and Lebanon:’ Upon which God says, ‘ Let it suffice thee,  
 ‘ speak no more unto me of this matter,’ Deut. iii. 25, 26.—  
 Many instances of the like nature are mentioned in scripture;  
 and, indeed, nothing is more obvious from daily experience,  
 that what the apostle James observes, that persons ‘ ask and  
 ‘ receive not, because they ask amiss,’ James iv. 3. or what the  
 apostle Paul says, ‘ We know not what we should pray for as  
 we ought, Rom. viii. 26.

(2.) We are, at other times, straitened in our affections,  
 and so know not how to ask any thing with a suitable frame of  
 spirit: It is certain we cannot excite our affections, or espe-  
 cially put forth those graces which are to be exercised in  
 prayer, when we please. Our hearts are sometimes dead,  
 cold, and inclined to wander from God in this duty; and, at  
 other times, we pray with a kind of indifferency, as though it  
 was of no great importance whether our prayer were answered  
 or no. How seldom do we express that importunity in this  
 duty which Jacob did, ‘ I will not let thee go, except thou  
 ‘ bless me?’ Gen. xxxii. 26. And as for those graces that are  
 to be exercised in prayer, we often want that reverence, and  
 those high and awful thoughts of the divine Majesty, which  
 we ought to have, who draw nigh to a God of infinite perfec-  
 tion; nor, on the other hand, do we express those low and  
 humble thoughts of ourselves, as our own meanness, the im-  
 perfection of our best performances, and the infinite distance  
 which we stand at from God, ought to suggest; and to this  
 we may add, that we are often destitute of that love to Christ,  
 and trust in him, which are necessary to the right performance  
 of this duty, as also of that hope of being heard, which is a  
 very great encouragement to it.

2. We are now to enquire wherein the Spirit is said to help  
 our infirmities; and this may be considered as adapted to that  
 two-fold necessity which we are often under, respecting the  
 matter or frame of spirit with which this duty is to be per-  
 formed.

(1.) The Spirit helps our infirmities, with respect to the  
 matter of prayer. This is not in the least derogatory to his  
 divine glory, if he is pleased to condescend thus to converse

with man, and it is not contrary to the nature of things; for the Spirit, being a divine Person, searches the heart, and can impress those ideas on the souls of his people, whereby they may be led into the knowledge of those things that they ought to ask in prayer, with as much facility as any one can convey his ideas to another by words. If it was impossible for God to do this, his providence could not be conversant about intelligent creatures, any otherwise than in an objective way, in which it would not differ from that which may be attributed to finite spirits. And it would have been impossible for God to have imparted his mind and will by extraordinary revelation, (without which, it could not have been known) if he may not, though it be in an ordinary way, communicate those ideas to the souls of his people, whereby they may be furnished with matter for prayer.

I am not pleading for extraordinary revelation; for that is to expect a blessing that God does not now give to his people: But I only argue from the greater to the less; whereby it may appear, that it is not impossible, or absurd, from the nature of the thing, or contrary to the divine perfections, for God to impress the thoughts of men in an ordinary way; since he formerly did this in an extraordinary, as will be allowed by all, who are not disposed to deny and set aside revealed religion. Moreover, there was such a thing in the apostle's days, as being led by the Spirit, which was distinguished from his miraculous and extraordinary influences, as a Spirit of inspiration; otherwise, it is certain, he would not have assigned this as a character of the children of God, which he does, Rom. viii. 14. And when our Saviour promises his people the *Spirit to guide them into all truth*, John xvi. 13. I cannot think that this only respected the apostles, or their being led into the truths that they were to impart to the church by divine inspiration; but it seems to be a privilege that belongs to all believers: Therefore, we conclude, that it is no absurdity to suppose that he may assist his people, as to what concerns the matter of their prayers, or suggest to them those becoming thoughts which they have in prayer, when drawing nigh to God in a right manner.

Some have enquired, whether we may conclude that the Spirit of God furnishes his people with words in prayer, distinct from his impressing ideas on their minds? This I would be very cautious in determining, lest I should hereby not put a just difference between this assistance of the Spirit, that believers hope for, and that which the prophets of old received by inspiration. I dare not say, that the Spirit's work consists in furnishing believers with proper expressions, with which their ideas are clothed, when they engage in this duty, but



rather with those suitable arguments and apprehensions of divine things, which are more immediately subservient thereunto: Accordingly the apostle, speaking of the Spirit's assisting believers, when they know not what to pray for as they ought, says, that he does this *with groanings that cannot be uttered*: that is, he impresses on their souls those divine breathings after things spiritual and heavenly, which they sometimes, notwithstanding, want words to express; though, at the same time, the frame of their spirits may be under a divine influence, which God is said to know the meaning of, when he graciously hears and answers their prayers, how imperfect soever they may be, as to the mode of expression.

(2.) The Spirit helps our infirmities by giving us a suitable frame of spirit, and exciting those graces which are to be exercised in this duty of prayer. This the Psalmist calls, *preparing their hearts*; which God does, and then *causes his ear to hear*, Psal. x. 17. which is a very desirable blessing; and, in order to our understanding it aright, let it be considered,

[1.] That we cannot, without the Spirit's assistance, bring our hearts into a right frame for prayer; and that is the reason why we engage in this duty, in such a manner as gives great uneasiness to us when we reflect upon it; so that when we pretend to draw nigh to God, we can hardly say that we worship him as God, but become vain in our imaginations; and the corruption of our nature discovers itself more at this time than it does on other occasions; and Satan uses his utmost endeavours to distract and disturb our thoughts, and take off the edge of our affections; whereby we seem not really to desire those things which, with our lips, we ask at the hand of God. As for an unregenerate man, he has not a principle of grace, and therefore cannot pray in faith, or with the exercise of those other graces which he is destitute of; and the believer is renewed but in part, and therefore, if the Spirit is not pleased to excite the principle of grace which he has implanted, he is very much indisposed for this duty, which cannot be performed aright without his assistance.

[2.] We are, nevertheless, to use our utmost endeavours, in order thereunto, hoping for a blessing from God to succeed them. Accordingly, we are to meditate on the divine perfections, and the evil of sin, which is contrary thereunto; whereby we are rendered guilty, defiled, and unworthy to come into the presence of God; yet we consider ourselves as invited to come to him in the gospel, and encouraged by his promise and grace, to cast ourselves before his footstool, in hope of obtaining mercy from him.

We are also to examine ourselves, that we may know what sins are to be confessed by us, and what are those necessities

which will afford matter for petition or supplication in prayer, together with the mercies we have received ; which are to be thankfully acknowledged therein. We are also to consider the many encouragements which we have, to draw nigh to God in this duty, taken from his being ready to pardon our iniquities, heal our backslidings, help our infirmities, and grant us undeserved favours. We must also impress on our souls a due sense of the spirituality of the duty we are to engage in, and that we have to do with the heart-searching God, who will be worshipped with reverence and holy fear ; and therefore we are to endeavour to excite all the powers and faculties of our souls, to engage in this duty in such a way that we may hereby glorify his name, and hope to receive a gracious answer from him.

[3.] When we have used our utmost endeavours to bring ourselves into a praying frame, yet we must depend on the Holy Spirit to give success thereunto, that we may be enabled to exercise those graces that are more especially his gift and work : And, in order thereunto,

1st, We must give glory to him as the author of regeneration, since no grace can be exercised in this duty but what proceeds from a right principle, or a nature renewed, and internally sanctified, and disposed for the performance hereof ; which is his work, as the *Spirit of grace and of supplication*, Zech. xii. 10.

2dly, As we are to draw nigh to God in this duty, as a reconciled God and Father, if we hope to be accepted by him ; so we are to consider, that this is the peculiar work of the Spirit, whereby we are *enabled to cry, Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6. This will not only dispose us to perform this duty in a right manner, so as to enable us to pray in faith ; but it will afford us ground of hope that our prayers will be heard and answered by him.

3dly, Inasmuch as we often are straitened in our spirits, which is a great hindrance to us in this duty, we must consider it as a peculiar blessing and gift of the Holy Ghost, to have our hearts enlarged ; which the Psalmist intends, when he says, *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name* ; Psal. cxlii. 7. and it is a peculiar branch of that liberty which he is pleased to bestow on his people, under the gospel-dispensation ; as the apostle says, *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*, 2 Cor. iii. 17. And by this means our affections will be raised, and we enabled to pour out our souls before him.

This may give us occasion to enquire concerning the difference that there is between raised affections in prayer, which unregenerate persons sometimes have, from external motives ; and those which the Spirit excites in us as a peculiar blessing ;

whereby he assists us in the discharge of this duty. There are several things in which they differ ; as,

1st, The former of these oftentimes proceeds from a slavish fear and dread of the wrath of God ; the latter from a love to, and desire after him, which arises from the view we have of his glory, as our covenant God, in and through a Mediator.

2dly, Raised affections in unregenerate persons, are seldom found, but when they are under some pressing affliction, in which case, as the prophet says, *They will seek God early*, Hos. v. 15. but when this is removed, the affections grow stupid, cold, and indifferent, as they were before his afflicting hand was laid upon them : Whereas, on the other hand, a believer will find his heart drawn forth after God and divine things, when he is not sensible of any extraordinary affliction that gives vent to his passions ; or he finds, that as afflictions tend to excite some graces in the exercise whereof his affections are moved, so when it pleases God to deliver him from them, his affections are still raised while other graces are exercised agreeably thereunto.

3dly, Raised affections, in unregenerate men, for the most part, carry them forth in the pursuit of those temporal blessings which they stand in need of : Thus when Esau sought the blessing carefully with tears, it was that outward prosperity which was contained therein, that he had principally in view, as disdaining that his brother Jacob should be preferred before him ; or, as it is said, *made his Lord, and his brethren given him for servants*, Gen. xxvii. 37. but he had no regard to the spiritual or saving blessings contained therein : Whereas, a believer is most concerned for, and affected with those blessings that immediately accompany salvation, or contain in them the special love of God, or communion with him, which he prefers to all other things : Thus the Psalmist says, *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good ? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*, Psal. iv. 6. And to this we may add,

4thly, Whatever raised affections unregenerate persons may have, they want a broken heart, an humble sense of sin, and an earnest desire that it may be subdued and mortified ; they are destitute of self-denial, and other graces of the like nature, which, in some degree, are found in a believer, when assisted by the Spirit, in performing the duty of prayer in a right manner.

From what has been said concerning the Spirit's assistance in prayer, we may infer,

1st, That there is a great difference between the gift and the grace of prayer : The former may be attained by the improvement of our natural abilities, and is oftentimes of use to others

who join with us therein ; whereas the latter is a peculiar blessing from the Spirit of God, and an evidence of the truth of grace.

*2dly*, They who deny that the Spirit has any hand in the work of grace, and consequently disown his assistance in prayer, cannot be said to give him that glory that is due to him, and therefore must be supposed to be destitute of his assistance, and very deficient as to this duty.

*3dly*, Let us not presume on the Spirit's assistance in prayer, while we continue in a course of grieving him, and quenching his holy motions.

*4thly*, Let us desire raised affections, as a great blessing from God, and yet not be discouraged from engaging in prayer, though we want them ; since this grace, as well as all others, is dispensed in a way of sovereignty : And if he is pleased, for wise ends, to withhold his assistance ; yet we must not say, why should I wait on the Lord any longer ?

*5thly*, If we would pray in the Spirit, or experience his help, to perform this duty in a right manner, let us endeavour to walk in the Spirit, and to maintain a spiritual, holy, self-denying frame, at all times, if we would not be destitute of it, when we engage in this duty. This leads us to consider,

II. The persons for whom we are to pray ; and on the other hand, who are not to be prayed for.

1. As to the former of those : It is observed,

(1.) That we are to pray for the whole church of Christ upon earth ; by which we are to understand, all those that profess the faith of the gospel, especially such whose practice is agreeable to their profession ; and in particular, all those religious societies who consent to walk in those ordinances whereby they testify their subjection to Christ, as king of saints. The particular members of which these societies consist, are, for the most part, unknown to us ; so that we cannot pray for them by name, or as being acquainted with the condition and circumstances in which they are ; yet they are not to be wholly disregarded, or excluded from the benefit of our prayers : Thus the apostle speaks of the *great conflict he had*, not only *for them at Laodicea* ; but, *for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh*, Col. ii. 1. This is a peculiar branch of the communion of saints, and it is accompanied with those earnest desires which we have, that God may be glorified in them, and by them, as well as ourselves ; particularly we are to pray,

[1.] That they may be united together in love to God and to one another, John xvii. 21. That this may be attended with all those other graces and comforts which are an evidence of their interest in Christ.

[2.] That they may have the special presence of God with them in all his ordinances, which will be a visible testimony of his regard to them, and an honour put on his own institutions, as well as an accomplishment of what he promised to his apostles just before he ascended into heaven, that *he would be with them always even unto the end of the world*, Mat. xxviii. 20.

[3.] That they may be supported under the burdens, difficulties and persecutions which they meet with, either from the powers of darkness or wicked men, for Christ's sake, that *so the promise may be made good to them, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against them*, chap. xvi. 18.

[4.] That there may be added to particular churches out of the world, many such as shall be saved, Acts ii. 47. which shall be an argument of the success of the gospel: And when we pray, that God would magnify his grace in bringing sinners home to himself, we are to pray for the accomplishment of those promises that respect the conversion of the Jews: Thus the apostle says, *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved*, Rom. x. 1. and, that there may be a greater spread of the gospel throughout the most remote and dark parts of the earth, among whom Christ is, at present, unknown: This the apostle calls *The fulness of the Gentiles coming in*, chap. xi. 25. and it is agreeable to what is foretold by the prophet Isaiah, in chap. lx. which seems not as yet to have had its full accomplishment.

[5.] We are to pray that the life of faith and holiness may be daily promoted in all the faithful members of the church of Christ, that they may be enabled more and more to adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, and be abundantly satisfied, and delighted with the fruits and effects of his redeeming love.

[6.] That God would accept of those sacrifices of prayer and praise that are daily offered to him by faith, in the blood of Christ, in every worshipping assembly, which will redound to the advantage of all the servants of Christ, whom they think themselves obliged to make mention of in their prayers, as well as to the glory of God, which is owned and advanced thereby.

[7.] That the children of believers, who are devoted to God, may be under his special care and protection, that they may follow the footsteps of the flock, and fill up the places of those who are called off the stage of this world; that so there may be a constant supply of those who shall bear a testimony to Christ and his gospel in the rising generation.

[8.] That the members of every particular church of Christ may acquit themselves so as that they may honour him in the

eyes of the world, and be supported and carried safely through this waste howling wilderness, till they arrive at that better country for which they are bound; and that they may not be foiled or overcome while they are in their militant state, but may be joined with the church triumphant in heaven.

(2.) We are to pray for magistrates. This is not only included in the general exhortation given us to *pray for all men*; but they are particularly mentioned by the apostle, and it is intimated that it is *good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour*, 1 Tim. ii. 1—3. This also may be argued from hence, that magistracy is God's ordinance, Rom. xiii. 1, 2. and there is no ordinance which is enstamped with the divine authority, though it may principally respect civil affairs; but we are to pray that God would succeed and prosper it, that it may answer the valuable ends for which it was appointed.

Now there are several things that we are to pray for in the behalf of magistrates, viz. that they may approve themselves rulers after God's own heart, to *fulfil all his will*, Acts xii. 26. as was said of David; that their counsels and conduct may be ordered for his glory, and the good of his church; that they may not be a *terror to good works*; namely, to persons that perform them, but *to the evil*; and so *may not bear the sword in vain*, Rom. xiii. 3, 4. Accordingly we are to pray, that they may be a public blessing to all their subjects, and herein that promise may be fulfilled; *Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers*, Isa. xlix. 23. and, as an instance hereof, that under them *we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty*, 1 Tim. ii. 2. And, as to what concerns their subjects, that their authority may not be abused and trampled on by them, on the one hand, while they take occasion to offend with impunity; nor be dreaded as grievous to others who feel the weight thereof, in instances of injustice and oppression.

(3.) We are to pray for ministers. This is a necessary duty, inasmuch as their work is exceeding great and difficult; so that the apostle might well say, *Who is sufficient for these things*, 2 Cor. ii. 16. And, indeed, besides the difficulties that attend the work itself, there are others that they meet with, arising from the unstable temper of professed friends, who sometimes, as the apostle says, *become their enemies for telling them the truth*, Gal. iv. 16. or from the restless malice and violent opposition of open enemies; which evidently takes its rise from that inveterate hatred that they bear to Christ and his gospel. Moreover, as they have difficulties in the discharge of the work they are called to, so they must give an account to God for their faithfulness therein; and it is of the highest importance that they do this *with joy, and not with grief*,



Heb. xiii. 17, 18. as the apostle speaks ; and immediately he intreats the church's prayers, as that which was necessary in order hereunto. Now there are several things which ought to be the subject-matter of our prayers, with respect to ministers.

[1.] That God would send forth a supply or succession of them, to answer the church's necessities ; inasmuch as *the harvest is plenteous*, as our Saviour observes, *but the labourers are few*, Matt. xi. 37, 38.

[2.] That they may answer the character which the apostle gives of a faithful minister ; and accordingly *study to shew themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*, 2 Tim. ii. 15.

[3.] That they may be directed and enabled to impart those truths that are substantial, edifying, and suitable to the circumstances and condition of their hearers.

[4.] That they may be spirited with zeal, and love to souls, in the whole course of their ministry ; that the glory of God, and the advancement of his truth may lie nearest their hearts, and a tender concern and compassion for the souls of men, may incline them to use their utmost endeavours, as the apostle speaks, *to save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire*, Jude, ver. 23.

[5.] That their endeavours may be attended with success, which, in some measure, may give them a comfortable hope that they are called, accepted, and approved of by God, which, from the nature of the thing will tend to their own advantage, who make this the subject of our earnest prayers on their behalf ; and, indeed, the neglect of performing this duty, may, in some measure, be assigned as one reason why the word is often preached with very little success ; so that this ought to be performed, not barely as an act of favour, but as a duty that redounds to our own advantage.

(4.) We are to pray, not only for ourselves and our brethren, but for our enemies. That we are to pray for ourselves, none ever denied, how much so ever many live in the neglect of this duty ; and as for our obligation to pray for our brethren, that is founded in the law of nature ; which obliges us to love them as ourselves, and, consequently, to desire their welfare, together with our own.

However, it may be enquired, what we are to understand by our brethren, for whom we are to express this great concern in our supplications to God ? For the understanding of which, let it be considered, that, besides those who are called *brethren*, in the most known acceptation of the word, as Jacob's sons tell Joseph, *We be twelve brethren, sons of one father*, Gen. xlii. 32. it is sometimes taken, in scripture, for any near kins-

man : Thus Abraham and Lot are called *brethren*, chap. xiii. 8. though they were not sons of the same father, for Lot was Abraham's brother's son, chap. xi. 31. this is a very common acceptation of the word in scripture. Again, it is sometimes taken in a more large sense, for those who are members of the same church : Thus the apostle calls those that belonged to the church at Colosse, *the saints and faithful brethren in Christ*, Col. i. 2. and sometimes they who are of the same nation, are called brethren : Thus it is said, *When Moses was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel*, Acts vii. 23. And it is sometimes taken for those who make profession of the same religion with ourselves ; and also for those who are kind and friendly to us : Thus it is said, *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*, Prov. xvii. 17. and, indeed, the word is sometimes taken in the largest sense that can be, as comprizing in it all mankind, who have the same nature with ourselves, 1 John iv. 21. These are objects of love, and therefore our prayers are, especially in proportion to the nearness of the relation they stand in to us, to be directed to God on their behalf. Some, indeed, are allied to us by stronger bonds than others ; but none, who are entitled to our love, pity, and compassion, are to be wholly excluded from our prayers.

This will farther appear, if we consider that we are also to pray for our enemies, as the law of nature obliges us to do good for evil ; and consequently, as our Saviour says, we are to *pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us*, Matt. v. 44. We are not, indeed, to pray for them, that they may obtain their wicked and unjust designs against us ; or that they may have power and opportunity to hurt us ; for that is contrary to the principle of self-preservation, which is impressed on our nature ; but we are to pray for them.

[1.] That however they carry it to us they may be made Christ's friends, their hearts changed, and they enabled to serve his interest ; that they, together with ourselves, may be partakers of everlasting salvation ; therefore it is a vile thing, and altogether inconsistent with the spirit of a christian, to desire the ruin, much more the damnation of any one, as many wickedly and profanely do.

[2.] We are to pray that their corruptions may be subdued, their tempers softened, and their hearts changed ; so that they may be sensible of, and lay aside their unjust resentments against us. And,

[3.] If they are under any distress or misery, we are not to insult or take pleasure in beholding it, but to pity them, and to pray for their deliverance, as much as though they were not enemies to us.

(5.) We are to pray not only for all sorts of men now living; according to what is contained in the last head, but for those that shall live hereafter. This includes in it an earnest desire that the interest of Christ may be propagated from generation to generation; and his kingdom and glory advanced in the world until his second coming: Thus the Psalmist says, *He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer: This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created, shall praise the Lord*, Psal. cii. 17, 18. and our Saviour says, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word*, John xvii. 20.

2. We are now to consider those who are excluded from our prayers; and these are either such as are dead, or those who have sinned the sin unto death.

(1.) We are not to pray for the dead. This is asserted in opposition to what was maintained and practised by some in the early ages of the church, and paved the way for those abuses and corruptions which are practised by the church of Rome, at this day, who first prayed for the dead, and afterwards proceeded farther in praying for them. The first step that was taken leading hereunto, seems to have been their being guilty of great excesses in the large encomiums they made in their public anniversary orations, in commemoration of the martyrs and confessors, who had suffered in the cause of christianity. This was done at first, with a good design, viz. to excite those who survived, to imitate them in their virtues, and to express their love to the cause for which they suffered; but afterwards they went beyond the bounds of decency in magnifying and extolling them; and then they proceeded yet farther, in praying for them; This is often excused, by some modern writers, from the respect they bear to them, who first practised it; though it can hardly be vindicated from the charge of will-worship, since no countenance is given to it in scripture.

That which is generally alleged in their behalf, is, that they supposed the souls of believers did not immediately enter into heaven, but were sequestered, or disposed of in some place inferior to it, which they sometimes call *paradise*, or *Abraham's bosom*, where they are to continue till their souls are re-united to their bodies. Whether this place be above or below the earth, all are not agreed; but their mistake arises from their misunderstanding those scriptures which describe heaven under these metaphorical characters of *paradise*, or *Abraham's bosom* \*. Here they suppose that they are, indeed, delivered

\* See page 317.

from the afflictions and miseries of this present life ; but yet not possessed of perfect blessedness in God's immediate presence. Therefore they conclude, that there was some room for prayer, that the degree of happiness which they were possessed of, might be continued, or rather, that it might in the end, be perfected, when they are raised from the dead, and admitted to partake of the heavenly blessedness.

Others thought, that at death, the sentence was not peremptorily past either on the righteous or the wicked, so that there was room left for them to pray for the increase of the happiness of the one, or of the mitigation of the torment of the other ; and therefore, in different respects, they prayed for all, both good and bad, especially for those who were within the pale or inclosure of the church ; and above all, for such as were useful to, and highly esteemed by it.

The principal thing that is said in vindication of this practice (for what has been but now mentioned, as the ground and reason thereof, will by no means justify it) is, that though the souls of believers are in heaven ; yet their happiness will not be, in all respects, complete, till the day of judgment : Therefore, in their prayers, they chiefly had regard to the consummation of their blessedness at Christ's second coming, together with the continuance thereof, till then ; without supposing that they received any other advantage thereby. And, inasmuch as this is not a matter of uncertainty, they farther observe, that many things are to be prayed for, which shall certainly come to pass, whether we pray for them or no ; *e. g.* the gathering of the whole number of the elect, and the coming of Christ's kingdom of glory : Therefore they suppose, that the advantage principally redounds to those who put up prayers to God for them, as hereby they express their faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, and the future blessedness of the saints, and the communion that there is between the church militant and triumphant.

This is the fairest colour that can be put upon that ancient practice of the church, and the many instances that we meet with, in the writings of the Fathers, concerning their prayers for the dead \*.

\* That several of the Fathers practised and pleaded for praying for the dead, is evident from what Cyprian says, *Epist. xxxix.* concerning the church's offering sacrifices, by which he means prayers for the martyrs ; among whom, he particularly mentions *Laurentius* and *Ignatius*, on the yearly return of those days, on which the memorial of their martyrdom was celebrated. And *Eusebius*, in the life of *Constantine*, *Lib. iv. Cap. lxxi.* when speaking concerning the funeral obsequies performed for that monarch, says, that a great number of people, with tears and lamentations poured forth prayers to God for the emperor's soul. And *Gregory Nazianzen* prayed for his brother *Cesarinus* after his death. *Vid. Ejusd in Fun. Cesar, Orat. i.* Also *Ambrose* prayed for the religious emperors, *Valentinian* and *Gratian*, and,

Thus concerning the practice of the church, before we read of the fictitious place which the Papists call *purgatory*; where they fancy, that separate souls endure some degrees of torment, and are relieved by the prayers of their surviving friends; which was not known to the church before the seventh century; and is without any foundation from scripture, as has been before observed under a foregoing answer\*. Now since this was formerly defended, and is now practised by the Papists, the contrary doctrine is asserted in this answer, viz. that we are not to pray for the dead; and that this may farther appear, let it be considered,

That the state of every man is unalterably fixed, at death; so that nothing remains which can be called an addition to the happiness of the one, or the misery of the other, but what is the result of the re-union of the soul and body at the resurrection; and therefore to pray that the saints may have greater degrees of glory conferred upon them, or sinners a release from that state of misery in which they are, is altogether ungrounded; and therefore such prayers must be concluded to be unlawful.

That the state of man is fixed at death is sufficiently evident from scripture: Thus our Saviour, in the parable of the *rich man* and *Lazarus*, speaks of the one as immediately *carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom*, Luke xvi. 22, &c. (by which, notwithstanding what some ancient writers have asserted to the contrary, we are to understand heaven;) and the other as being in a place of *torments*, without any hope or probability of the least mitigation thereof; whereby hell, not purgatory is intended: And the apostle says, *It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment*, Heb. ix. 27, by which he intends, that all men must leave the world; and when they are parted from it, their state is determined by Christ; though this is not done in so public and visible a manner, as it will be in the general judgment: If therefore the state of men be unalterably fixed at death; it may be justly inferred from thence, that there is no room for any one to put up prayers to God on their behalf: Prayer must have some proof on which it relies, otherwise it cannot be addressed to God by faith; or, as the apostle expresses it, *nothing wavering*, James i. 6. Now, if we have no ground to conclude that our prayers shall be heard and answered; or have any doubt in our spi-

*for Theodosius, and for his brother Satyrus. Vid. Ejuad. de obit. Valentin. Theodos. Et Satyr. And Augustin speaks of his praying for his mother Monica, after her decease, in Confess. Lib. ix. Cap. xiii. And Epiphanius defends this practice with so much warmth, that he can hardly forbear charging the denial hereof, as one of Aetius's heresies. Vid. Epiphanius. heres. lxxv. And some Popish writers, when defending their praying for the dead, have, with more malice than reason, charged the Protestants with being Aetians, upon this account.*

\* See Quest. lxxvi. page 312.

its whether the thing prayed for be agreeable to the will of God; such a prayer cannot be put up in faith, and therefore is not lawful.

*Obj.* 1. The Papists, in defence of the contrary doctrine, are very much at a loss for scriptures to support it: However, there is one, taken from a passage in the apocryphal writings, in which Judas Maccabeus, and his company, are represented as praying and offering a sin-offering, and thereby making reconciliation for the dead, i. e. some that had been slain in battle, 2 Maccab. xii. 43,—45.

*Answ.* The reply that some make to this, is, that the prayers for the dead here spoken of, are of a different nature from those which the Papists make use of in the behalf of those whom they pretend to be in purgatory, or, that they prayed for nothing but what some of the Fathers, as before-mentioned did, viz. that they might be raised from the dead, whereby they expressed their faith in the doctrine of the resurrection: But, I think there is a better reply may be given to it, namely, that the argument is not taken from any inspired writing; and therefore no more credit is to be given to it than any other human composure, in which some things are true, and others false: And as for this book in particular, the author himself plainly intimates that he did not receive it by divine inspiration; for he says, *If I have done well, and as it is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto*, chap. xv. 38. which is very honestly said; but not like an inspired writer, and therefore nothing that is said therein is a sufficient proof of any important article of faith or practice, such as that is, which we are now defending.

*Obj.* 2. It is farther objected, that the apostle Paul puts up a short and affectionate prayer for Onesiphorus, in 2 Tim. i. 18. *The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day*; whereas, it is concluded by some, that, at the time the apostle wrote this epistle, Onesiphorus was dead, since there are two petitions put up, one in this verse for him, and another in ver. 16. for *his house*; and in chap. iv. 19. when he salutes some of his friends, according to his custom, he makes mention of the *household of Onesiphorus*, not of him. This turn Grotius himself gives of this scripture\*. And the Papists greedily embrace it, as it gives countenance to their practice of praying for the dead.

*Answ.* It is but a weak foundation that this argument is built on; for though Paul salutes his household, and not himself, in the close of this epistle, it does not follow from hence,

\* *Vid. Grot. in loc.*



that he was dead ; for he might be absent from his family at this time, as he often was, when engaged in public service, as being sent by the church, as their messenger, to enquire concerning the progress and success of the gospel in other parts ; or to carry relief to those who were suffering in Christ's cause : It may be, the apostle might be informed that he was then in his way to Rome, where he was himself a prisoner when he wrote this epistle ; and if so, it would not have been proper to send salutations to him, whom he expected shortly to see, while, at the same time, he testified the great love he bore to him and all his family, as being a man of uncommon zeal for the interest of Christ and religion.

(2.) They are not to be prayed for who have sinned the sin unto death. This sin we read of, as what excludes persons from forgiveness, in scripture, Matt. xii. 32. in which such things are said concerning it, as should make us fear and tremble, not only lest we should be left to commit it, but give way to those sins which border upon it ; and there is enough expressed therein to encourage us to hope that we have not committed it ; which is the principal thing to be insisted on, when we treat on this subject in our public discourses, or any are tempted to fear, lest they are guilty of it. Here let it be observed, that though it be called *the sin unto death*, we are not to suppose that it is one particular act of sin, but rather a course or complication of sins, wherein there are many ingredients of the most heinous nature. And,

[1.] That it cannot be committed by any but those who have been favoured with gospel light ; for it always contains in it a rejection of the gospel, which supposes the revelation or preaching thereof.

[2.] It is not merely a rejecting the gospel, though attended with sufficient objective evidence, in those who have not had an inward conviction of the truth thereof, or whose opposition to it proceeds principally from ignorance, as the apostle says concerning himself, that *though he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious ; yet he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly, in unbelief*, 1 Tim. i. 13.

[3.] It is a rejecting the gospel which we once professed to embrace, and therefore carries in it the nature of apostacy : Thus the Scribes and Pharisees, when they attended on John's ministry, professed their willingness to adhere to Christ, and afterwards, when he first appeared publicly in the world, they were convinced in their consciences, by the miracles which he wrought, that he was the Messiah ; though, after this they were offended in him, and ashamed to own him, because of the humbled state and condition in which he appeared in the world ;

for which reason, they, in particular, were charged with this sin in the scripture before-mentioned.

[4.] It also contains in it a rejecting of Christ and the known truth, out of envy, and this attended with reviling, persecuting, and using their utmost endeavours to extirpate and banish it out of the world, and beget in the minds of men the greatest detestation of it: Thus the Jews are said to *deliver Christ out of envy*, Matt. xxvii, 18. and with the same spirit they persecuted the gospel.

[5.] Such as are guilty of this sin, have no conviction in their consciences of any crime committed herein; but stop their ears against all reproof, and set themselves, with the greatest hatred and malice, against those, who, with faithfulness, admonish them to the contrary.

[6.] They go out of the way of God's ordinances, and wilfully exclude themselves from the means of grace, which they treat with the utmost contempt, and use all those endeavours that are in their power, that others may be deprived of them.

[7.] This condition they not only live but die in; so that their apostacy is not only total, but final.

However, I cannot but observe, that some are of opinion that this sin cannot be now committed, because we have not the dispensation of miracles, whereby the Christian religion was incontestibly proved, in our Saviour's and the apostles' time: And the main thing in which it consisted in the scripture before-mentioned, in Matt. xii. was, in that the Pharisees were charged with saying, that Christ *cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils*; whereby they intimate that those miracles, which they had before been convinced of the truth of, as being wrought by the finger of God, were wrought by the devil: which supposes that they were eye-witnesses to such-like miracles wrought, which we cannot be: Therefore it is concluded by some, that this sin cannot now be committed; inasmuch as the dispensation of miracles is ceased. But this method of reasoning will not appear so strong and conclusive, if we consider, that though, it is true, the gospel is not now confirmed to us by miracles; yet we have no less ground to believe that the christian religion was confirmed by this means, than if we had been present at the working of these miracles. Nevertheless, though it should be alleged, that this ingredient cannot, in every circumstance, be contained in the sin against the Holy Ghost, in our day; yet there are other things included in the description of it, before-mentioned, in which it principally consists, that bear a very great resemblance to that sin which we have been considering: As for instance, if persons have formerly believed Christ to be the Messiah, and been persuaded that this was incontestibly proved by the mi-

acles which he wrought, and accordingly, were inclined to adhere to him, and embrace the gospel, wherein his person and glory are set forth; and yet have afterwards apostatized from this profession; and if this had been attended with envy and malice against Christ; and if they have treated the evidence which they once acknowledged, the Christian religion, to have been undeniably supported by, with contempt and blasphemy; and have totally rejected that faith which they once professed, arising from carnal policy, and the love of this world; and when this is attended with judicial hardness of heart, blindness of mind, and strong delusions, together with a rooted hatred of all religion, and a malicious persecution of those that embrace it; This is what we cannot but conclude to bear a very great resemblance to that which, in scripture, is called the unpardonable sin; and it is a most deplorable case, which should be so far improved by us, as that we should use the utmost caution, that we may not give way to those sins which bear the least resemblance to it: Nevertheless, doubting christians are to take heed that they do not apply this account that has been given of it to themselves, so as to lead them to despair; which is not the design of any description thereof, which we have in scripture. Now that these may be fortified against such-like objections, let it be considered,

1st, That it is one thing peremptorily to determine that it is impossible for any one to commit this sin in our day, since the dispensation of miracles is ceased, (which is, in effect, to suppose that we can have no evidence for the truth of the Christian religion, but what is founded on ocular demonstration; such as they who saw Christ's miracles;) and another thing to determine concerning particular persons, that they are guilty of this sin. It is certain that this matter might be determined with special application to particular persons in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, when there was among other extraordinary gifts, that of discerning of spirits; and consequently it might be known, whether they who apostatized from the faith of the gospel, had before this, received a full conviction of the truth thereof; and it might then be known, by extraordinary revelation, that God would never give them repentance, and therefore their apostacy would be final; and, it is more than probable, that this was supposed by the apostle, when he speaks of some that had committed this sin, who are not to be prayed for: But these things cannot be known by us; therefore I would not advise any one to forbear to pray for the worst of sinners, who seem most to resemble those that are charged with this sin, this matter not being certainly known by us.

2dly, That which is principally to be considered for the encouragement of those who are afraid that they have committed

this sin, is, that persons certainly know that they have not committed it, though they are in an unregenerate state ; as,

1st, *When they have not had opportunity*, or those means that are necessary to attain the knowledge of the truth, and so remain ignorant thereof ; or if they have had sufficient means to know it, they have not committed this sin, *if they desire and resolve to wait on God in his ordinances*, in order to their receiving good thereby.

2dly, *They who are under conviction of sin*, disapprove of, and *have some degree of sorrow and shame for it*, may certainly conclude that they have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost.

3dly, If persons have reason to think that their hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that they are greatly backslidden from God ; yet they ought not to conclude that they have committed this sin, *if they are afraid lest they should be given up to a perpetual backsliding*, or dread nothing more than a total and a final apostacy ; upon which account they are induced to pray against it, and to *desire a broken heart, and that faith, which, at present, they do not experience*. In this case, though their state be dangerous, yet they ought not to determine against themselves, that they have committed the sin unto death.

The use which we ought to make of this awful doctrine, and the hope that there is that we have not committed this sin is,

1. That we should *take heed that we do not give way to wilful impenitency, and a contempt of the means of grace*, lest we should provoke God to give us up to judicial hardness of heart, so as to make sad advances towards the commission thereof : Let us take heed that we do not sin against the light and conviction of our own consciences, *and wilfully neglect and oppose the means of grace*, which, whether it be the sin unto death or no, is certainly a crime of the most heinous and dangerous tendency.

2. Let doubting christians *take heed that they do not give way to Satan's suggestions*, tempting them to conclude that they have committed this sin ; which they are sometimes afraid that they have, though they might determine that they have not, did they duly weigh what has been but now observed concerning this matter.

3. *Let us bless God, that yet there is a door of hope, and resolve by his grace*, that we will always wait on him in the ordinances which he has appointed, till he shall be pleased to give us ground to conclude better things concerning ourselves, even things that accompany salvation. This leads us to consider,

III. What we are to pray for ; particularly,

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1. For those things which concern the glory of God. And that we may know what they are, we are to enquire; whether, if God should give us what we ask for, it would have a tendency to set forth any of his divine perfections, and thereby render him amiable and adorable in the eyes of his creatures, so that in answering our prayers, he would act becoming himself? We are also to take an estimate of this matter, from the intimation he has given us hereof in his word, in which we may observe, not only whether he has given us leave, but commands and encourages us to ask for it; more especially, whether he has promised to give it to us; and, whether our receiving the blessing we ask for, has a tendency to fit us for his service, that hereby praise that waits for him, may be ascribed to him.

2. We are to pray for those things which concern our own good, or the good of others. These are particularly insisted on in the Lord's prayer, which is explained in the following answers; therefore it is sufficient for us, at present, to consider the good we are to pray for in general, namely, temporal blessings, which are the effects of divine bounty, concerning which, our Saviour says, *Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things*, Mat. vi. 32. We are also to pray for spiritual blessings, such as forgiveness of sin, strength against it, and the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, to produce in us holiness of heart and life; as also, for deliverance from, and victory over our spiritual enemies. We are also to pray for the consolations of the holy Ghost, arising from assurance of the love of God, whereby we may have peace and joy in believing; and for all those blessings which may make us happy in a better world.

3. We are to pray for those things which are lawful to be asked of God; and accordingly,

(1.) The things we pray for, must be such as it is possible for us to receive, and particularly such as God has determined to bestow, or given us ground to expect, in this present world: Therefore we are not to pray for those blessings to be applied here, which he has reserved for the heavenly state; such as a perfect freedom from sin, tribulation or temptation, or our enjoying the immediate views of the glory of God: These things are to be desired in that time and order, in which God has determined to bestow them; therefore we are to wait for them till we come to heaven, and, at present, we are to desire only to be made partakers of those privileges which he gives to his children in their way thither.

(2.) We are not to pray that God would inflict evils on others, to satisfy our private revenge for injuries done us; since this is, in itself, unlawful, and unbecoming a Christian frame of spirit, and contrary to that duty which was before

considered, of our praying for our very enemies, and seeking their good.

(3.) We are not to ask for outward blessings without setting bounds to our desires thereof; nor are we to ask for them unseasonably, or for wrong ends. We are not to pray for them as though they were our chief good and happiness, or of equal importance with things that are more immediately conducive to our spiritual advantage; and therefore, whatever measure of importunity we express in praying for them, it is not to be inconsistent with an entire submission to the divine will, as being satisfied that God knows what is best for us; or, whether that which we desire, will, in the end, prove good or hurtful to us; much less ought we to ask for outward blessings, that we may abuse, and, as the apostle James speaks, *Consume them upon our lusts*, James iv. 3.

**QUEST. CLXXXV.** *How are we to pray?*

**ANSW.** We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the Majesty of God, and deep sense of our own unworthiness, necessities, and sins, with penitent, thankful, and enlarged hearts, with understanding, faith, sincerity, fervency, love, and perseverance, waiting upon him, with humble submission to his will.

**T**HIS answer respects the manner of performing this duty, and the frame of spirit with which we are to draw nigh to God. Accordingly,

1. We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the Majesty of God; otherwise our behaviour would be highly reprobated by him, and reckoned no other than a thinking him altogether such an one as ourselves. Some of the divine perfections have a more immediate tendency to excite an holy reverence; accordingly we are to consider him as omnipresent, and omniscient, to whom our secret thoughts, and the principle from whence our actions proceed, are better known than they can be to themselves. We are to conceive of him as a God of infinite holiness; and therefore he cannot but be highly displeased with that worship that is opposite thereunto, as proceeding from a conscience defiled with sin, or performed in an unholy manner. Thus the prophet says, *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*, Hab. i. 13. that is, thou canst not behold it without the utmost detestation; and therefore, *if we regard it in our heart, he will not hear our prayers*, Psal. lxvi. 18. We are also to have a due sense of the spirituality of his nature, that we may worship



him in a spiritual manner; therefore we are not to entertain any carnal conceptions, or frame any ideas of him, like those we have of finite or corporeal beings; nor are we to think it sufficient, that our external mien and deportment have been grave, and carried in it a shew of reverence, when our hearts have not, at the same time, been engaged in this duty, or disposed to give him the glory that is due to his name. We are also to draw nigh to him with a due sense of those perfections that tend to encourage us to perform this duty, with hope of finding acceptance in his sight. Therefore we are to conceive of him, as a God of infinite goodness, mercy, and faithfulness, with whom is plenteous redemption, in and through a Mediator, which is suitable to our condition, as indigent, miserable, and guilty sinners; and a God of infinite power, who is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all we are able to ask or think*, Eph. iii. 20.

2. We are to pray to God with an humble sense of our own unworthiness. This is the necessary result of those high conceptions we have of his divine excellency and greatness; whereby we are led to consider ourselves as infinitely below him; and, indeed, the best of creatures are induced hereby to worship him with the greatest humility: Thus the Seraphim are represented in that vision, which the prophet Isaiah had of them, as ministering to, and attending upon our Lord Jesus, when sitting on a throne on his temple; as *covering their faces and their feet with their wings*, denoting their unworthiness to behold his glory, or to be employed by him in his service, Isa. vi. 1—4. But when we take a view of his infinite holiness, and our own impurity, this should be an inducement to us to draw nigh to him, with the greatest humility: As dependent creatures, we have nothing but what we derive from him; as frail dying creatures, we wither away, and are brought to nothing, Job xiii. 25. Job compares this to a leaf that is easily broken, and driven to and fro, or to the dry stubble, that can make no resistance against the wind that pursues it; and the Psalmist, speaking of man in general, says, *Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him; or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?* Psal. civ. 3. And elsewhere it is said, *What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?* Job vii. 17. These are humbling considerations; but we shall be led into a farther sense of our own unworthiness, when we consider ourselves as sinful creatures, worthy to be abhorred by God; therefore he might justly reject us, and refuse to answer our prayers. But since this humble frame of spirit is so necessary for the right performance of this duty, let us farther observe, as an inducement hereunto.

(1.) That the greatest glory we can bring to God can make no addition to his infinite perfections: Thus it is said, *Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure, that is, any advantage, to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?* Job xxiii. 2, 3. And elsewhere, *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thy hand?* ch. xxxv. 7. denoting that it is impossible for us, by any thing we can do or suffer for his sake, to make him more glorious than he would have been in himself, had we never had a being: Therefore, if there is nothing by which we can lay any obligations on God, we have reason to address ourselves to him with a sense of our own unworthiness.

(2.) We are so far from meriting any good thing from the hand of God, that by our repeated transgressions, notwithstanding the daily mercies we receive from him, we give farther proofs of our great unworthiness; and, indeed, if we are enabled to do any thing in obedience to his will, this is not from ourselves; yea, it is contrary to the dictates of corrupt nature, and must be ascribed to him as the author of it.

(3.) If we could do the greatest service to God by espousing his cause, and promoting his interest in the world; it is no more than what we are bound to do; and, at the same time we must consider, that *it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13.

(4.) The best believers recorded in scripture, have entertained a constant, humble sense of their own unworthiness: Thus Abraham, when he stood before the Lord, making supplications in the behalf of Sodom, expresses himself thus, *Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.* And Jacob says, *I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant*, Gen. xxxii. 10. And they who have been most zealous for, and made eminently useful in promoting Christ's interest in the world, have had an humble sense of their own unworthiness; as the apostle says concerning himself, *I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle*, 1 Cor. xv. 9. And he immediately adds, *By the grace of God I am what I am*, ver. 10. And elsewhere he styles himself, *less than the least of all saints*, Eph. iii. 8.

We have another instance of humility in prayer, in the Psalmist's words, *I am a worm, and no man*, Psal. xxii. 6. which, so far as they have any reference to his own case, may give us occasion to infer, that the most advanced circumstances, in which any are in the world, are not inconsistent with humility, when drawing nigh to God in prayer; but if we consider him speaking in the person of Christ, as several expres-

sions of this Psalm argue him to do, and cannot well be taken in any other sense \*; then we have herein the most remarkable instance of the humble address that was used by Christ in his human nature, when drawing nigh to God in prayer; which is certainly a great motive to induce us to engage in this duty with the utmost humility.

3. We are to draw nigh to God in prayer, with a sense of our necessities, and the sins that we have committed against him. Accordingly, we are to consider ourselves as indigent creatures, who are stripped and deprived of that glory, and those bright ornaments which were put on man at first in his state of innocency; destitute of the divine image, and all those things that are necessary to our happiness, unless he is pleased to supply these wants, forgive our iniquities, and grant us communion with himself; which things we are to draw nigh to him in prayer for. We are also, in this duty, to have a sense of sin, viz. the guilt that we contract thereby, and the punishment we have exposed ourselves to, that we may see our need of drawing nigh to God in Christ's righteousness; and also of the stain and pollution thereof, which may induce us to fall down before the footstool of the throne of grace, with the greatest degree of self-abhorrence. We are also to consider how we are enslaved to sin, how much we have been, and how prone we are at all times, to *serve divers lusts and pleasures*, Tit. iii. 3. and to *walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*, Eph. ii. 2.

Moreover, we are to consider sin as deeply rooted in our

\* Many suppose that all those Psalms, in which some particular expressions are referred to in the New Testament, as having their accomplishment in Christ, are to be understood as containing a double reference, namely, to David, as denoting his particular case, and to Christ, of whom he was an eminent type. But as for Psalm xxii. there are several expressions in it, not only applied to Christ in the New Testament; but they cannot well be understood of any other but him. In the first verse he uses the same words that were uttered by Christ on the cross, Matt. xxvii. 46. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? and in ver. 8. he trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him: This was an expression used by those who mocked and derided him, Matt. xxvii. 41, 45. And what is said in verses 14, 17. All my bones are out of joint; I may tell them, they look and stare upon me; does not seem to be applicable to David, from any thing said concerning him elsewhere; but they are a lively representation of the torment a person endures, when hanging on a cross, as our Saviour did; which has a tendency to disjoint the bones, and cause them to stick out. And when it is said, ver. 16, 18. they pierced my hands and my feet; and they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture; the former was fulfilled in Christ's being nailed to the cross, and his side pierced with a spear; and the latter is expressly referred to as fulfilled in the parting of Christ's garments, and casting lots upon his vesture, Matt. xxvii. 35. as an accomplishment of what was foretold, by the royal prophet in this Psalm. These expressions cannot, in the least, be applied to David, but are to be understood of our Saviour; therefore, we may conclude that those words in ver. 6. I am a worm, &c. are particularly applied to him.

hearts, debasing our affections, and captivating our wills. If we are in an unconverted state, we are to look upon it as growing and encreasing in us, rendering us more and more indisposed for what is good, by which means we are set at a farther distance from God and holiness: On the other hand, if we have ground to hope we are made partakers of converting grace, then we have acted contrary to the highest obligations, and been guilty of the greatest ingratitude. These things we are to endeavour to be affected with, when drawing nigh to God in prayer, in order to our performing this duty aright.

4. There are several graces that are to be exercised in prayer;

(1.) Repentance: This is necessary, because we are sinners; and as such, are to come into the presence of God with confession, joined with supplication which must be made with a penitent frame of spirit; the contrary to which, is a tacit approbation of sin, and a kind of resolution to adhere to it, which is very unbecoming those who are pleading for forgiveness: Accordingly, when God promised that he would *pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications*, he adds, that *they shall look upon him, whom they have pierced, and mourn for him, or for it, as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born*: And that this shall be done by *every family apart, and their wives apart*, Zech. xii. 10. & seq. So when the priests, the ministers of the Lord, are commanded to pray, that he would spare his people; they, are, at the same time, to *weep between the porch and the altar, to rent their hearts, and turn unto the Lord their God*, Joel ii. 13. 17. And when Israel is advised to *take with them words*, and instructed how they should pray, they are exhorted to *turn unto the Lord*; to repent of their seeking help from Assyria and Egypt, and of that abominable idolatry which they had been guilty of, Hos. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 8.

Now there are several subjects very proper for our meditation; which may, through the divine blessing accompanying it, excite this grace, when we are engaged in the duty of prayer; particularly the multitude of transgressions which are charged on the consciences of men by the law, that *every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*, Rom. iii. 19. and especially the ingratitude which we have reason to accuse ourselves of, and our contempt of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, which is discovered in the gospel; and our having done many things in the course of our lives, which fill us with shame and sorrow, whenever we come

into the presence of God, to pour out our hearts before him in this duty.

(2.) The next grace to be exercised in prayer is, thankfulness, in which respect prayer and praise ought to be joined together: Thus the Psalmist says, *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed, O thou that hearest prayer*, Psal. lxxv. 1, 2. That this is a part of prayer has been observed under a foregoing answer; in which we considered the many blessings that we have reason to be thankful for. I shall only add, at present, that it is matter of thankfulness, that we have liberty of access to God, in hope of obtaining mercy from him, as sitting on a throne of grace, who might have been forever banished from his presence, or have been brought before his judgment-seat as criminals, doomed to everlasting destruction.

Moreover, we are to bless him, not only that we have leave to come before him, but have often experienced that he has heard, and answered our prayers, and therein has fulfilled that promise, *I said not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain*, Isa. xlv. 19. And that we may be brought into a thankful frame, we ought to consider,

[1.] The worth of every mercy; especially those that are spiritual, or accompany salvation; and this we may judge of by the price that was paid for it, which is no less than the blood of Jesus; which the apostle not only styles *precious*, but speaks of it as infinitely preferable to every thing that is *corruptible*, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. And we may, in some measure, take an estimate thereof by the worth and excellency of the soul, and as it is conducive to promote its eternal welfare.

[2.] We are also to consider every saving blessing, as the fruit and result of everlasting love, and as the consequence of God's eternal design, in having chosen those, who are the objects thereof, to salvation in Christ, Jer. xxxi. 3. Eph. i. 3, 4. We must also consider these mercies as discriminating, whereby God distinguishes his people from the world, and herein glorifies the riches of his grace, in those who deserve to have been, for ever, the monuments of his wrath: We might here consider, as an inducement to this grace of thankfulness, the aggravations of the sin of ingratitude.

1st, It is a virtual disowning our obligation to, or dependence on God, from whom we receive all mercies, and a behaving ourselves in such a manner as though we were not beholden to him for them, or could be happy without him; as though we were self-sufficient, and did not look upon him as the fountain of blessedness.

2dly, It is a refusing to give him the glory of his wisdom,

power, goodness, and faithfulness, which are eminently displayed in the blessings that he bestows.

*3dly*, It is disagreeable to the large expectations we have of those blessings he has reserved for his people, or promised to them, or that hope which he has laid up for them in heaven. Therefore we cannot but conclude that ingratitude argues a person destitute of that holiness which eminently discovers itself in the exercise of the contrary grace: Accordingly the apostle joins these two characters together, when speaking of the vilest of men, whom he styles, *unthankful, unholy*, 2 Tim. iii. 2.

(3.) Another grace, to be exercised in prayer, is faith. This implies an habitual disposition of soul, proceeding from a principle of regenerating grace, whereby we are led to commit ourselves, and all our concerns, into Christ's hand, depending on his merits and mediation for the supply of all our wants, considering him as having purchased, and as being authorized to apply, all the benefits of the covenant of grace, which are the subject-matter of our supplications to him. More particularly, faith exerts and discovers itself in prayer,

[1.] By encouraging the soul, and giving it an holy boldness to draw nigh to God, notwithstanding our great unworthiness. If we are afraid to come into the presence of an holy God, and, destruction from him is a terror to us, if the threatenings he has denounced against sinners, such as we know ourselves to be, discourage us from drawing nigh to him, so that we are ready to say with Job, 'Therefore am I troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him,' Job xxiii. 15. If his almighty power, that can easily sink us into perdition, overwhelms our spirits, and fills us with the utmost distress and confusion, so that we cannot draw nigh to him in prayer, considering him as an absolute God; we are encouraged by faith, to look upon him as our covenant God, and Father in Christ; and then all his divine perfections will afford relief to us. His sin-revenging justice is regarded by faith, as that which is fully satisfied by Christ's obedience and sufferings; and therefore will not demand that satisfaction at our hands, which it has already received from our surety, who was 'made sin for us' though he 'knew no sin,' that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21. His infinite power is no longer looked upon, as engaged to destroy us, but rather to succour us under all our weakness; and therefore, as Job says, 'He will not plead against us with his great power; no, but he will put strength in us,' Job xxiii. 6. We consider it as ready to support us under the heaviest pressures, and so enable us to perform the



most difficult duties, and to overcome all our spiritual enemies, who would be otherwise too strong for us : So that this attribute is so far from discouraging us from drawing nigh to God in prayer, that, by faith, we behold it as delighting to exert and glorify itself, in doing those great things for us which we have in view, when we engage in this duty.

[2.] Faith discovers itself in prayer, by enabling us to plead, and apply to ourselves, the great and precious promises which God has given to his people in the gospel. As prayer cannot subsist without a promise, so we are enabled, by faith, to apprehend and plead the promises, and to say, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope,' Psal. cxix. 49. And hereby we look upon God as ready to bestow the blessings which he has promised, and his faithfulness as engaged to make them good. Accordingly the Psalmist says, 'Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications ; in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness,' Psal. cxliii. 1. There is nothing that we want, or ought to pray for, but there are some promises, contained in the word of God, which faith improves and takes encouragement from in this duty : And since what we pray for, respects either temporal, or spiritual, and eternal blessings, these are looked upon by faith as promised ; as the apostle says, *godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 18. This might be very largely insisted on, and many instances given hereof, which are contained in scripture ; but I shall more especially consider those promises which respect God's enabling us to pray, and his hearing and answering our prayers, which faith lays hold on, and improves, in order to our performing this duty in a right manner.

1st, There are promises of the Spirit's assistance to enable us to pray. This the apostle calls his *making intercession for us, according to the will of God*, in Rom. viii. 27. And our Saviour says, in Luke xii. 13. *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?*

2dly, There are other promises that respect God's hearing and answering prayer. Thus it is said, in Psal. lxxxvi. 7. *In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee ; for thou wilt answer me* : And elsewhere in Psal. cii. 17. *God will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer*. This is considered as being of a very large extent : Thus our Saviour says, in John xvi. 23. *Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you* : And in chap. xv. 7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you* : Which universal expressions of

God's giving believers *what they will*, are to be understood of his granting their lawful and regular desires ; and, indeed, faith will never ask any thing but what tends to the glory of God, and that with an entire submission to his will ; though it is far otherwise with respect to those prayers that are not put up in faith.

Moreover God has promised to hear and answer all kinds of prayer, provided they proceed from this grace ; particularly, united prayers in the assemblies of his saints, as he says to Solomon, after the dedication of the temple, in 2 Chron. vii. 15. *Mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place ;* and those prayers that are put up to God in families, where a small number are joined together ; though it be but *two or three*, Christ has promised to be *in the midst of them*, xviii. 20. not only to assist them in this duty, but to give them what they ask for. There are also promises made to secret prayer : Thus when our Saviour encourages his people to *pray to their Father, which is in secret*, he tells them, *My Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly*, chap. vi. 6.

Here it will be enquired, whether it be necessary in order to our praying by faith, that we be assured, at all times, that our prayer shall be heard.

To this it may be answered,

1st, That it is not our duty to believe that every prayer shall be heard ; for God heareth not sinners, that is, those who are under the reigning power of sin, and consequently are destitute of the grace of faith ; nor will he hear those *prayers that proceed from feigned lips* : Thus it is said, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*, Psal. lxxvi. 18.

2dly, It is not the duty of those who have the truth of grace, to believe that their prayer shall be heard, when, by reason of their infirmity, or the weakness of their faith, they ask for that which is unlawful, and not redounding to the glory of God and their real good.

3dly, If what we pray for may be for the glory of God, and redound to our advantage ; yet it is not our duty to determine, with too great peremptoriness, that he will certainly grant what we ask for, immediately, or in that particular way which we desire ; since he may answer prayer, and yet do it in his own time and way.

4thly, It is not our duty to believe assuredly, that God will give us all those temporal blessings that we ask for ; especially if they be not absolutely necessary for us, since he may answer such-like prayers in value, though not in kind, and so give spiritual blessings, instead of those temporal ones, which we pray for ; in which case none will say, that he is

unfaithful to his promise, though we have not those blessings in kind that we desire : Therefore it is our duty, and the great concern of faith in prayer, to be assured, that as God knows what is best for us, so he will make good his promises, in such a way, that we shall have no reason to conclude ourselves to have been disappointed, or that we have asked in faith, but have not obtained.

I am sensible that there is a difficulty in the mode of expression used by the apostle James, in chap. i. 6, 7. *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering ; for let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord :* By which, the apostle does not intend, that he who doubts whether his prayer shall be answered, cannot be said, in any sense, to pray in faith ; for, as assurance of our salvation is not of the essence of faith, so that faith cannot subsist without it ; in like manner assurance, or a firm persuasion that the very thing we ask shall be given, is not such an essential ingredient in prayer, as that we should determine, that for want of it, we shall receive nothing that is good from the Lord. Therefore, I conceive, that the apostle, by *wavering* in this text, rather respects our being in doubt about the object of faith ; or else our not being stedfast in the grace of faith, but praying with hypocrisy, as he illustrates it by the similitude taken from a *wave driven with the wind* ; which sometimes moves one way, at other times the contrary ; and he farther explains it, when he says, in ver. 8. *a double-minded man, is unstable in all his ways* ; so that the person, whom he describes as *wavering* is the same with a *double-minded man*, or an hypocrite : Such an one cannot ask in faith ; therefore the apostle does not hereby intend that no one can exercise this grace in prayer, but he that has a full assurance that his prayer shall be answered, in that particular way and manner as he expects.

*Obj.* 1. It is objected by some, that they have no faith ; therefore since this grace must be exercised in prayer, they are very often discouraged from performing the duty of prayer.

*Ans.* That though the want of a prepared frame of spirit, for any duty affords matter of humiliation, yet it is no excuse for the neglect thereof ; and as for prayer in particular, we are to wait on God therein, for a prepared frame of spirit, that by this means, we may draw nigh to him in a right manner, as well as for a gracious answer from him.

[2.] If we cannot bring glory to God by a fiducial pleading of the promises, or applying them to ourselves ; we must endeavour to glorify him by confessing our guilt and unworthiness, and acknowledging that all our help is in him.

[3.] It is possible for us to have some acts of faith in prayer,

when we are not sensible thereof, and at the same time, bewail our want of this grace.

[4.] If none were to pray but those who have faith, then it would follow that none must pray for the first grace, which supposes a person to be in an unregenerate state; nevertheless, such are obliged to perform this duty, as well as they can, and therein to hope for that grace which may enable them to do it as they ought. (a)

*Obj.* 2. It is objected by others, that though they dare not lay aside the duty of prayer, yet, inasmuch as they do not experience those graces, which are necessary for the right performance thereof, nor any returns of prayer, they have no satisfaction in their own spirits.

*Answ.* To this it may be replied;

1st, That there may be faith in prayer, and yet no immediate answer thereof. God herein acts in a way of sovereignty, whereby he will have his people know that if he grants their requests, it shall be in his own time and way. Therefore it is their duty to wait for him till he is pleased to manifest himself as a God hearing prayer, and thereby removing the discouragements that, at present, they labour under.

2dly, There are other ways by which the truth of grace is to be judged of, besides our having sensible answers of prayer. Sometimes, indeed, God may give many intimations of his acceptance of us, though, at present we know it not.

(3.) The next grace to be exercised in prayer, is, love to God: This implies in it an earnest desire of his presence, delight in him, or taking pleasure in contemplating his perfections as the most glorious and amiable object. Desire supposes him, in some measure, withdrawn from us; or that we are not possessed of that complete blessedness, which is to be enjoyed in him; and delight supposes him present, and, in some degree, manifesting himself unto us. Now love to God, in both these respects, is to be exercised in prayer. Is he in any measure withdrawn from us? we are, with the greatest earnestness to long for his return to us, whose loving-kindness is better than life. Is he graciously pleased, in any degree, to manifest himself to us as the fountain of all we enjoy or hope for? this will have a tendency to excite our delight in him, and induce us to conclude that our happiness consists in the enjoyment of him. These graces are to be exercised at all times, but more especially in prayer, which is an offering up of our desires to God; in which we first press after the enjoyment of himself, and then of his benefits. And, as

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(a) What under one aspect is grace, under another is duty.

we are to bless and praise him for the discoveries we have of his glory, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to the securing our spiritual good and advantage ; this is to express that delight in him, which is the highest instance of love.

(4.) Another grace to be exercised in prayer, is submission to the will of God ; whereby we leave ourselves and our petitions in his hand, as being sensible that he knows what is best for us. This does not include in it a being indifferent whether our prayers are heard or no ; for that is to contradict what we express with our lips, by the frame of our spirits. Whatever may be concluded to be lawful for us to ask, as redounding to our advantage, and is expressly promised by God, that we ought to request at his hand, in prayer ; and if we pray for it, we cannot but desire that our prayer may be heard and answered ; and this is not opposed to that submission to the divine will, which we are speaking of, provided we leave it to God to do what he thinks best for us, being content that the way and manner of his answering us, as well as the time of his bestowing those blessings which we want, together with the degree thereof ; especially if they are such as are of a temporal nature, ought to be resolved into his sovereign will. Thus concerning the graces that we are to exercise in prayer.

There are other things mentioned in this answer, which are necessary to our exercising those graces, viz. our minds being enlightened, our hearts enlarged, and our having sincerity in the inward part.

[1.] There must be some degree of understanding, since ignorance is so far from being, as the Papists pretend, the mother of devotion, that it is inconsistent with the exercise of those graces, with which we ought to draw nigh to God in prayer. The affections, indeed, may be moved, where there is but a very little knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel ; but they will, at the same time, be misled ; and this can no more be called religious devotion than the words or actions of one that is in a phrenzy, can be called rational ; therefore, as prayer is unacceptable without the exercise of grace, so grace cannot be exercised without the knowledge of the truth, as derived from the sacred treasury of scripture.

Here we might consider, that we must know something of God who is the object of prayer, as well as of all other acts of religious worship. We must also know something of Christ the Mediator, through whom we have access to, as well as acceptance with him ; and something of the work and glory of the Holy Ghost, on whom we are to depend for his assistance in presenting our supplications to God. We must know our necessities, otherwise we cannot tell what to ask for ; and

also the promises of the gospel, otherwise we cannot be encouraged to hope for an answer.

[2.] In order to our exercising grace in prayer, we must have some degree of enlargedness of heart; that is, when every thing that tends to contract our affections, abate the fervency of our spirits, or hinder that importunity which we ought to express for the best of blessings, is removed. Now our hearts may be said to be enlarged in prayer.

1st, When we draw nigh to God in this duty with delight and earnest longing after his presence, and an interest in his love, which we reckon preferable to all other blessings.

2dly, When we are affected with a becoming sense of his glorious perfections, and our own nothingness, in order to our adoring him, and coming before him with the greatest humility.

3dly, When we have suitable promises given in, and are enabled to plead them with a degree of hope, arising from the goodness and faithfulness of God, that he will fulfil them; and that more especially as we draw nigh to him as to a covenant-God.

4thly, When our thoughts and affections are engaged without wandering, weariness, or lukewarmness, and filled with importunity, agreeable to the importance of the duty, and our absolute need of the blessings we pray for.

[3.] In order to our exercising those graces, which are necessary for our drawing nigh to God aright in prayer, we must have sincerity of heart: This includes in it much more than what is generally so called, as opposed to dissimulation, in those who perform some good actions merely to be seen of men, or who take up religion to answer some base and vile end, which they have in view; in which respect a sincere person is one that is no dissembler: But that sincerity, which we are speaking of, consists in a person's acting from a principle of grace implanted in regeneration; or when a person can appeal to God, as Job does, *Thou knowest that I am not wicked*, Job x. 7. that is, that there is no reigning sin, whereby my heart is alienated from, or set against thee. A sincere person is such an one as our Saviour describes, when he speaks of Nathaniel, and gives him this character, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*, John i. 48. In this case a person's heart and actions go together; and he may truly say, as David does, *attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips*, Psal. xvii. 1. Thus concerning the graces that are to be exercised in prayer, and what is necessary in order thereunto.

What is farther observed concerning this duty, is, that we are to persevere in prayer; resolving not to desist from wait-



ing on God therein, whatever seeming discouragements may, at present, lie in our way. Prayer is not a duty to be performed only at some certain times, as the prophet speaks of those who, *in their affliction will seek God early*, Hos. v. 15. or, as the mariners in Jonah, who *cried, every man unto his god*, in a storm; though it is probable, they seldom prayed at other times, Jon. i. 5. But we are to *pray always with all prayer and supplication, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance*, Eph. vi. 18. that is, we ought always to endeavour to be in a praying frame, and, on all occasions, to lift up our hearts to God for direction, assistance, and success in every thing we do, agreeable to his will, and for a supply of those wants which daily recur upon us.

1st, By reason of the deadness and stupidity of our spirits, which we cannot bring into a suitable frame for the discharge of this duty; and therefore we are ready to conclude, that while we draw nigh to God with our lips, our hearts are far from him. This is, indeed, a very afflictive case; but we ought not from hence, to take occasion to lay aside the duty but rather depend on the assistance of the Spirit, to enable us to perform it in a right manner.

2dly, Another discouraging circumstance is, God's denying us sensible returns of prayer, which he may do for various reasons. Sometimes he sees those defects that we are guilty of in prayer, which he is obliged to testify his displeasure against; and this he sometimes does by hiding himself, or, as it were, withdrawing from us, and, in all appearance, shutting out our prayers, that we may take occasion to search out the secret sin that lies at the root thereof; which we must confess and be humbled for. Thus when Joshua, after a small defeat, which Israel had received by the men of Ai, fell upon his face, and spread the matter before the Lord in prayer, God condescends to tell him the reason of it; 'Get thee up, wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing; therefore could they not stand before their enemies,' Josh. vii. 10—12. And when the sin was discovered, and Achan, who troubled them punished, what he asked for was granted. Again, God may deny an immediate answer to prayer, out of his mere sovereignty, that hereby we may know, that it is not for us to prescribe to him the time or way in which he shall dispense those benefits, which are not owing to our merit, but his free grace.

3dly, Sometimes we pray, but do not use other means, which God has appointed for the obtaining the blessing! Thus, when Israel was disheartened, being pursued by Pharaoh and his host, and did not care to move out of their places, Moses ad-

dresses himself to God in prayer, and *the Lord said unto him, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward; and then he ordered him to lift up his rod, and stretch it over the sea, and divide it, that they might go through the midst thereof on dry ground, Exod. xiv. 15, 16.*

We are not only to pray, but to use other means that God has appointed; without which, we cannot expect that prayer should be answered. Thus Hezekiah, when sick, prayed to God, who assured him, that he had heard his prayers, and would heal him; nevertheless, he was to use the means which God had ordered, by *taking a lump of figs and laying it on the boil; which he did accordingly, and was restored to health, Isa. xxxviii. 21.* Do we pray for a comfortable subsistence in the world? we must, if we expect that God should answer us, use industry in our callings, as well as own him by prayer and supplications. Do we pray for any of the graces of the Spirit in order to the beginning or carrying on the work of sanctification? we must, at the same time, attend on the means of grace, which God has ordained for that purpose: Or, do we pray for assurance of the love of God, and that spiritual comfort which is the result thereof? we must be diligent in the performance of the work of self-examination; or else we are not to expect that God will answer our prayers.

*4thly,* Sometimes God delays to answer our prayers, because we have not given him the glory of former mercies; or else he designs hereby to try our patience, whether we are not only inclined to wait upon him, but to wait for him; as the prophet says, *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd, Hab. ii. 1.* So the Psalmist says, *As the eye of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us, Psal. cxxiii. 2.* And elsewhere the Psalmist, though he was in great *depths*, and stood in need of an immediate answer, when he cried unto the Lord; yet he determines to *wait for him, and hope in his word*; that is, while he is expecting a mercy, he does not despair of having it in the end, because he depends on God's word of promise; but yet he resolves to *wait as those that watch for the morning, Psal. cxxx. 1, 5, 6,* which contains a mixture of two graces, namely, patiently waiting, and yet earnestly desiring the blessing expected. This is our indispensable duty, whereby we glorify God, as being sensible that it is not for us to prescribe to him, when he should fulfil our desires: Whereas we should say, with Jacob, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me, Gen. xxxii. 26.* I will persevere in prayer till thou art pleased to

give me all the blessings I stand in need of, and bring me into that state in which I shall be satisfied with thy goodness, and my imperfect prayers turned into endless praises.

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**QUEST. CLXXXVI.** *What rule hath God given for our direction in the duty of prayer?*

**ANSW.** The whole word of God is of use to direct us in the duty of praying; but the special rule of direction, is that form of prayer, which our Saviour Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer.

**QUEST. CLXXXVII.** *How is the Lord's prayer to be used?*

**ANSW.** The Lord's prayer is not only for direction, as a pattern, according to which we are to make other prayers, but may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty.

**A**S to what is said in the former of these answers, concerning the word of God, being a rule for our direction in prayer, it may be observed,

I. That we need some direction in order to our performing this duty; for man is naturally a stranger both to God and himself. He knows but little of the glorious perfections of the divine nature, and is not duly sensible of the guilt which he contracts, or of the mercies which he receives; and without the knowledge hereof, we shall be at a loss as to the matter of the duty which we are to engage in. It is certain, many have a general notion of religion, or of some moral duties, which they are sensible of their being obliged to perform: Nevertheless, they cannot address themselves to God in such a manner as he requires; so that it may truly be said of them, *that they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness, Job xxxvii. 19.* We find that the disciples themselves, who were intimately conversant with Christ, and, as it must be supposed, often joined with him in prayer, were, notwithstanding, at a loss, as to this duty; and therefore they say, *Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples, Luke xi. 1.*

II. It is farther observed, that the word of God is to be made use of for our direction in prayer. This is evident, inasmuch as we are to ask for nothing but what is agreeable to his revealed will, which is contained therein; and no one, who is well acquainted with it, will have reason to say, that he wants sufficient matter for prayer. This is a very useful head,

and therefore we shall consider several things which occur to us in scripture ; which ought to be improved, in order to our direction and assistance in the performance of this duty. And,

1. The historical parts of scripture, which contain an account of the providences of God in the world, and the church, may be of use for our direction in prayer, as we are to pray, not only for ourselves, but for others : Therefore his former dealings with his people, will furnish us with matter accommodated to our present observation of the necessities of the church of God in our day : Accordingly we find,

(1.) That the sins which a professing people have committed, have been followed with many terrible instances of the divine wrath and vengeance : Thus we have an account, of the universal apostacy of the world from God, which occasioned their being destroyed by a flood ; and the unnatural lusts of the inhabitants of Sodom, for which they were consumed by fire from heaven ; and of the idolatry and other abominations committed by the Israelites, for which it is said, that *God was wroth, and greatly abhorred them* ; upon which they were exposed to many temporal and spiritual judgments, so that, as the Psalmist says, *he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men ; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hand*, Psal. lxxviii. 59—61. From hence we may take occasion to enquire, whether we have not been guilty of sins equally great, and, it may be, of the same kind, which are to be confessed, and the judgments which have ensued to be deprecated by us ? And when we read in the New Testament, of some flourishing churches, planted by the apostles, in the beginning of the gospel dispensation, that have nothing left but a sad remembrance of the privileges which they once enjoyed ; in whom, what Christ says, concerning his removing *his candlestick out of its place*, was soon fulfilled, Rev. iii. 15. This is of use for our direction in prayer, that he would keep his church and people from running into the same sins, and exposing themselves to the same judgments.

(2.) We have an account, in scripture, of the church's increase and preservation, notwithstanding the darkest dispensations of providence, and the most violent persecutions which it has met with from its enemies. When it was in hard bondage, and severely dealt with, in Egypt, it is observed, that the more the Egyptians *afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew*, Exod. i. 12. and when they have, in all appearance, been nearest to ruin, God has opened a door for their deliverance, and oftentimes done great things in their behalf, which they looked not for. We have also an historical

account, in scripture, of God's owning and encouraging his people, so long as they have kept close to him; and of his visiting their iniquities with a rod, when backsliding from him; and, indeed, whatever we read concerning the providences of God towards particular believers in the Old or New Testament, the same may be observed therein, which is of very great use for our direction in prayer; and accordingly their experiences are recorded for our instruction, and their necessities, that we may know what to pray for, as far as there is an agreement between the account we have of them, and what we find in ourselves.

2. The word of God, as it is a rule of faith, contains those great doctrines, without the knowledge whereof, we cannot pray aright. Thus we have an account in scripture, not only of the Being and perfections of God, which may be known by the light of nature, but of those glorious truths which cannot be known but by divine revelation: And,

(1.) Of the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; of the Father's giving all spiritual blessings to his people, in and through a Mediator; and the Son is considered as invested in this office and character, and, as God incarnate procuring for us, by his obedience and death, forgiveness of sins, and a right to eternal life. We have also an account of the Holy Ghost, as being a divine person, and therefore equal with the Father and Son; yet as subservient to them in his method of acting, as the application of redemption attains the end of the purchase thereof, in like manner as the purchase of it was a means to bring about that *purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the world began*, 2 Tim. i. 9. These doctrines are necessary to direct us in those things which respect the distinct glory which we are to give to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the method in which we are to hope for the blessings which we ask for in prayer. Thus the apostle, speaking of this duty, supposes that we are acquainted with this doctrine, when he says, *Through him, that is, Christ, we have an access by one Spirit unto the Father*, Eph. ii. 18.

(2.) In the word of God, we have not only an account of the works of nature and providence, or God's being the Creator and Governor of the world, which we have some knowledge of, in a method of reasoning from the divine perfections; but we have an account therein of those works which have an immediate reference to our salvation, and that special providence in which God expresses a greater regard to the heirs of salvation than to all the world besides: When we draw nigh to God in prayer, we are not barely to consider him as the God to whom we owe our being, as men, but our well-being as christians,

delivered from that ruin which we brought on ourselves, by our apostacy from him ; and also, *what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead*, chap. i. 18, 19. as the apostle expresses it in that affectionate prayer put up for the church at Ephesus. And when we survey the works of providence, we are not barely to think of God as the Governor of the world in general, but to consider what have been those special acts of providence, by which he has governed man before and since the fall, and to consider the first covenant as made with him in innocency ; and the covenant of grace, as being a dispensation of grace, established in and with Christ, as the Head of the elect, in order to their being delivered from that state of sin and misery into which they had brought themselves. These doctrines will be of use for our direction in prayer, as hereby we are led to acknowledge our fallen state, what we were by nature, and what we should have been, had we been left in that state ; and hereby we are also led to adore the riches of God's grace, as he brings the greatest good to his saints out of the greatest evil.

(3.) The word of God gives us a distinct account of the offices in which Christ is invested, as they are suited to the necessities of his people, which is a means for our direction concerning what we are to ask for, with a particular relation to each of them, and the hope we have that he will grant our request. As he is appointed by the Father, to be our High Priest, to make atonement for sin ; our Advocate, to plead our cause ; our Prophet, to lead us in the way of salvation ; and our King, to subdue us to himself, and defend us from the assaults of our spiritual enemies. So we are, in our prayers, to improve these discoveries which we have thereof, as a means to direct us in those things which are the subject-matter both of prayer and praise.

4. The word of God is of use for our direction in prayer, as we have an account therein of those duties which are to be performed by us as men, or christians, in every condition of life, and in all those relations which we stand in to one another. As for that which is matter of duty in general, or that obedience which we owe to God, this cannot be performed but by his assistance ; which is humbly to be asked in prayer : And accordingly we are to say as one does, Lord, work in me that which thou requirest, and then require what thou pleasest. Here we might shew how all the duties which God has commanded, may be of use to direct us in prayer : that hereby we may be led to apply ourselves to him, that he would enable us to perform them ; and all the sins forbidden in scripture, may



be of use to instruct us what to deprecate, when we pray that God would keep us from our own iniquities, and what we are to confess before him, and implore the forgiveness of ; and all those commands which respect instituted worship, viz. our attendance on the ordinances, or the exercise of various graces therein, in the whole course of our conversation : These are of use for our direction in prayer, as hereby we know what to ask for, with relation thereunto ; and particularly as to what concerns the advantage we hope to receive, under the means of grace, whenever we draw nigh to God in the way which he has appointed.

5. As the word of God contains many promises and predictions, together with their accomplishment, for the encouragement of our faith and hope in prayer, it is of use to direct us in the performance of this duty. As for the predictions that are fulfilled, so far as they respect the blessings which God designed to bestow on his church, they are equivalent to promises, and we are to take occasion from thence, to adore and magnify his faithfulness ; and hope that whatever remains to be done for us, or his people in general, shall, in like manner, have its accomplishment, which will afford matter of encouragement to us in addressing ourselves to him for it.

The promises which are contained in scripture, are also a motive and inducement to prayer. These are a declaration of God's will to give the blessings, which he sees necessary for us, and therefore are of great use in order to our performing this duty aright. Thus God gives an intimation of the great things that he will do for, or bestow upon his people, when he says, in Jer xxxi. 33. *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people* : and there are many expressions of the like nature, which contain the form of a promise. But besides these, there are others which are equivalent to, and may be applied by us in like manner as though they were laid down in the same form, as the promises generally are ; as,

(1.) When God is said, in his word, to be able to do his people good, or bestow some particular blessings upon them, this gives them ground to conclude, that he will do it, or that his power shall be engaged in their behalf : Thus God is said, in Jude, ver. 24. *to be able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*. And elsewhere it is said, 2 Cor. ix. 8. *that God is able to make all grace abound towards his people, that they always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work* : This is the same as though it had been said, that he would do this for them.

(2.) When God is said to glorify any of his perfections in giv-

ing those blessings that his people want, this is also equivalent to a promise: Thus, in *Exod. xxxiv. 4, 6.* when *the Lord passed by before Moses, and proclaimed the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, &c.* it is the same as though he had said that he would shew mercy to them, since the design thereof is to encourage them to hope for it.

(3.) Whatever blessings are said to be purchased by Christ as our Redeemer, or prayed for by him as our Advocate, these may be included in the number of promised blessings; for they will certainly be applied by him, who will not lose what he has purchased by his blood, and is never denied what he asks for.

(4.) The universal experience of believers, relating to the blessings that accompany salvation, contains the nature, though not the form, of a promise; and therefore, when this is recorded in scripture, for the encouragement of others, in all succeeding ages, it is as much to be applied by us when we are in like circumstances as though it were more directly promised to us: Thus when God's faithful servants are said, *1 Pet. i. 5.* to be *kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation; or,* when the Psalmist says, in *Psal. xxxvii. 25.* *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread;* these, and such-like expressions, are to be applied by us as promises.

(5.) That which is proposed to us, or which we are to have in view, as the end of our attending on ordinances, is equivalent to a promise; and accordingly, when we are commanded or encouraged to hope and pray for any spiritual blessings, when waiting upon God therein, in such a way as he requires, it is the same thing as though he had said, that he would give us those blessings. If a believer is thirsty, and encouraged to come to the waters; or if he wants grace or peace, and is told that these are to be attained in ordinances, the bare intimation that we are to seek these blessings in such a way is equivalent to a promise.

(6.) God's seeing our distress or knowing our wants, is sometimes to be understood in scripture, as containing the nature of a promise, relating to the supply thereof: Thus our Saviour tells his disciples, in *Matt. vi. 32.* *Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things;* which is the same as though he had told them, that God had promised or designed to bestow those outward blessings upon them: And when he designed, or promised to deliver his people out of the bondage, in which they were in Egypt, he says, *I have surely seen the affliction of my people: I know their sorrows, &c.* *Exod. iii. 7.* Thus concerning the manner in which the promises are laid down in scripture.

We shall now consider how they are to be made use of in order to our direction and encouragement in prayer. And here it may be observed, that the promises either respect outward, or spiritual blessings, both of which we are to pray for : Thus the apostle says, in 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come ;* the former respects the temporal dispensations of providence ; the latter, grace and glory, or the things that accompany salvation.

[1.] We shall consider the promises that respect temporal or outward blessings which we are obliged to pray for, as we stand in need of them. These are of various kinds ;

1st, There are promises of health and strength, whereby our passage through this world may be made easy and comfortable, and we better enabled to glorify God therein : Thus it is said, in Prov. iii. 7, 8. *Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.* And in Psal. ciii. 5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things ; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.*

2dly, There are promises of food and raiment, or the necessary provisions and conveniences of life, in Psal. xxxvii. 3. *Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* And in Deut. x. 18. *He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.*

3dly, There are promises of comfort and peace in our dwellings, in Job v. 24. *'Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace ; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.* And, in Psal. xci. 10. *'There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.'* And in Psal. cxxi. 8. *'The Lord shalt preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.'*

4thly, There are promises of quiet and composed rest by night, on our beds, in Job xi. 18, 19. *Thou shalt take thy rest in safety : Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid.* And in Prov. iii. 24. *When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid ; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.*

5thly, There are promises of success, and a blessing to attend us in our worldly callings, in Psal. cxxviii. 2. *Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands : Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.* And in Deut. xxviii. 4, 5, 12. *'Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, the fruit of thy cattle, and the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land, in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand : And thou shalt lend unto*

‘many nations, and shalt not borrow.’ And in Psal. i. 3. ‘He shall be like a tree, planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.’

6thly, There are promises of an intail of blessings on our families, in Psal. cxxviii. 3. ‘Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive-plants round about thy table.’ And, in Psal. ciii. 17. ‘The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children’s children.’ And, in Psal. cii. 28. ‘The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.’ And, in Psal. xlv. 16. ‘Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.’

I might have mentioned many more promises of outward blessings, which God will bestow on his people, though with this limitation, so far as it may be for his glory, and their real good, viz. such as respect riches, as in Psal. cxii. 3. ‘Wealth and riches shall be in his house; and his righteousness endureth for ever;’ or honours, as in 1 Sam. ii. 30. and these accompanied with long life; as, in Prov. iii. 17. ‘Length of days are in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.’ And, in Psal. xxxiv. 12, 13. ‘What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile;’ or, if God does not think fit to give them this, he will take them out of the world in mercy, and gather them into a better, to prevent their seeing the evil he designs to bring on the inhabitants thereof, Isa. lvii. 1. ‘The righteous is taken away from the evil to come.’ He has also promised some blessings that respect their good name, in Zeph. iii. 20. ‘I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth.’ And in Prov. x. 7. ‘The memory of the just is blessed.’ But that which I shall principally add concerning these and such-like outward blessings, is, that God has not only promised, that he will give them to his people, but that he will sanctify them to them for their spiritual advantage, and enable them to improve them aright to his glory, which will render them more sweet and desirable to them. Thus God has promised,

1st, That he will free his people, who enjoy outward good things, from the sorrow which is oftentimes mixed therewith, and tends greatly to embitter them, in Prov. x. 22. ‘The blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.’ He has also promised to give them inward peace, together with outward prosperity, in Psal. xxxvii. 11. ‘The

‘ meek shall inherit the earth ; and shall delight themselves in  
‘ the abundance of peace.’

*2dly*, He has promised to give them spiritual and heavenly blessings, together with the good things of this life, in Job xxii. 24—26. ‘ Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir  
‘ as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy  
‘ defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver : For then shalt  
‘ thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy  
‘ face unto God.’ And in Psal. xxiii. 5, 6. ‘ Thou preparest  
‘ a table before me in the presence of mine enemies ; thou  
‘ anointest mine head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surely  
‘ goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life ;  
‘ and I will, or, I shall, dwell in the house of the Lord for  
‘ ever.’

*3dly*, God has promised together with outward blessings, to give a thankful heart, whereby his people may be enabled to give him the glory thereof, in Deut. viii. 10. ‘ When thou  
‘ hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy  
‘ God, for the good land which he hath given thee.’ And, in Joel ii. 26. ‘ Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise  
‘ the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously  
‘ with you ; and my people shall never be ashamed.’

*4thly*, He has not only promised that he will confer outward good things on his people, but that he will make them blessings to others, and thereby enable them to lay out what he gives them for their good, to support his cause and gospel in the world ; and to relieve those that are in distress, in Gen. xii. 2. ‘ I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou  
‘ shalt be a blessing.’ And, in Deut. xxvi. 11. ‘ Thou shalt  
‘ rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath  
‘ given unto thee and unto thine house, thou and the Levite,  
‘ and the stranger that is among you.’ These promises more especially respect those who are in a prosperous condition in the world.

But there are others which are made to believers, in an afflicted state ; and, indeed, there is scarce any affliction which they are liable to, but what has some special promises annexed to it. Accordingly,

(1.) There are promises made to them when lying on a sick bed, in Psal. xli. 5. ‘ The Lord will strengthen him upon the  
‘ bed of languishing ; thou wilt make all his bed in his sick-  
‘ ness.’ And, in Deut. vii. 15. ‘ The Lord will take from thee  
‘ all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt  
‘ (which thou knowest) upon thee ; but will lay them upon all  
‘ that hate thee.’ And, in Exod. xxiii. 25. ‘ I will take sick-  
‘ ness away from the midst of thee.’

(2.) There are other promises made to believers, when poor

and low in this world, in Psal. cxxxii. 15. 'I will abundantly  
'bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread.'

(3.) There are other promises that respect God's giving a full compensation for all the losses which his people have sustained for Christ's sake, in Matt. xix. 29. 'Every one that  
'hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or  
'mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake,  
'shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit life everlasting.' And, in chap. x. 39. 'He that findeth his life shall  
'lose it; and he that loseth his life for my name's sake shall  
'find it.'

(4.) There are other promises made to believers under oppression, in Psal. xii. 5. 'For the oppression of the poor, for  
'the sighing of the needy, now will I arise (saith the Lord)  
'I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.' And in Hos. xiv. 3. 'In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.' And, in Psal. lxxviii. 5. 'A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the  
'widows, is God in his holy habitation.'

(5.) There are other promises made to believers, when reviled and persecuted for righteousness' sake, Matt. v. 11, 12, 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you,  
'and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my  
'sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your  
'reward in heaven.' And, in 1 Pet. iv. 19. 'Wherefore  
'let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the  
'keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful  
'Creator.'

(6.) There are promises made to God's people, when they are in distress, and, at present, see no way of escape: Thus when Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the prison, he had this promise given him, in Jer. xxxiii. 3. 'Call unto me, and I  
'will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things,  
'which thou knowest not.'

(7.) God has made promises suited to the condition of his people, when their lot is cast in perilous times: Thus it is said, in Isa. xliii. 2. '*When thou passest through the waters, I will  
be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow  
thee: When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt;  
neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

Now there are several mercies which God has promised to his people, under the various afflictions which we are exposed to, as,

(1st,) Sometimes he promises to prevent the afflictions which we are most afraid of, in Psal. cxxi. 7. 'The Lord shall preserve thee from all evils; he shall preserve thy soul.' And, in Job v. 19. 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven  
'there shall no evil touch thee.'



(2d,) He has promised to preserve his people from, or defend them in, a time of trouble, in Gen. xv. 1. 'Fear not Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' And, in Ezek. xi. 16. 'Thus saith the Lord; although I have cast them far off among the heathen; and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.'

(3d,) He has promised to moderate their afflictions, in Isa. xxvii. 8. 'In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind.' And, in Jer. xlvi. 28. 'Fear thou not, O Jacob, my servant, saith the Lord, for I am with thee, for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet I will not leave thee wholly unpunished.'

(4th,) He has also promised, that if need be, he will shorten the affliction, in Psal. cxxv. 3. 'The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.' And, in Mark xiii. 19, 20. 'In those days shall be affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation: And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh could be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.'

(5th,) God has also promised his people that he will enable them to bear those afflictions which he lays upon them, in Psal. xxxvii. 24. 'Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.' And, in 2 Cor. xii. 9. 'He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'

(6th,) He has promised to shew his people the particular sin that is the cause of the affliction, that they may be humbled for it, in Job xxxvi. 8, 9. 'If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he sheweth them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded.'

(7th,) He has promised to bring good to them out of their afflictions, in Isa. xxvii. 9. 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.' And in Psal. xcvii. 11. 'light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. And in Zech. xiii. 9. 'I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, that it is my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.' Thus concerning the promises that more especially respect outward blessings which God bestows on his people.

[2.] There are other promises contained in scripture, that

relate more especially to spiritual blessings, which are of great use to us, when we are asking them of God in prayer.

1st, There are promises that relate more especially to the ordinances or means of grace: These are various,

1. Some respect the duty of prayer, and also the event and success that shall attend it, in God's giving gracious returns, or answers thereof, in Psal. xci. 15. 'He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.' And in Jer. xxix. 12, 13. 'Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.' And, in Psal. l. 15. 'Call upon me, in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'

2 Another ordinance to which promises are also annexed, is meditation about spiritual things, in Prov. xiv. 22. 'Mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.' And, in Josh. i. 8. 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.' There are also promises made to those who read the word of God, to wit, that he will make known his words to them, so that they may understand them, Prov. i. 23. 'Turn you at my reproof: Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.'

3. There are promises made to those who attend on the public worship of God, in Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9. 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.' And, in Psal. cxxviii. 5. 'The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.'

4. There are promises made to religious fasting on special occasions, as in Mat. vi. 17. 'When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.'

5. There are promises made to alms-giving, in Prov. xi. 25. 'The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' And, in Eccl. xi. 1. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.'—And in 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7, 8. 'He which soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully: God loveth a cheerful giver, and is able to make all grace abound, &c.'

6. There are promises made to believers, when they appear in the behalf of truth, at those times when it is opposed and

perverted, that by this means it may not be run down, nor they confounded, or put to silence by its enemies, Luke xxi. 15. 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist.'

7. There are promises made to the religious and strict observation and sanctification of the Lord's day, Isa. lvi. 2. 'Blessed is the man that doth this; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.'

*2dly*, There are promises, contained in scripture, which respect God's giving his people special grace, together with that joy, peace and comfort that flows from it, which will be of great use to them, in order to their engaging aright in the duty of prayer.

1. There are promises of the grace of faith, and others that are made to it; as it is said, in John vi. 37. 'All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' And, in Eph. ii. 8. 'By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'

2. There are promises of the grace of repentance, in Rom. xi. 26. 'There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' And, in Ezek. xx. 43. 'Ye shall remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed.'

3. There are promises of love to God: Thus in Gal. v. 2. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love.' And, 2 Tim. i. 7. 'God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love, and of a sound mind.' And, in Rom. v. 5. 'Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' And, in 2 Thes. iii. 5. 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.'

4. Another grace promised is an holy filial fear of God, in Jer. xxx. 39, 40. 'I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear them for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' And, in Hos. iii. 5. 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness.'

5. Obedience to God's commands, which is an indispensable duty, is also considered as a promised blessing, in Deut. xxx. 8. 'Thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.'

Moreover, as there are promises of the graces of the Spirit, so the comforts that flow from thence are also promised: Thus

it is said in Isa. li. 12. *I, even I, am he that comforteth you.* And, in chap. xl. 1. *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people: Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, &c.* more particularly,

(1.) There are promises of peace of conscience, which is a great branch of those spiritual comforts which God gives his people ground to expect: Thus it is said in Isa. lvii. 18, 19. 'I will restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord.' And, in chap. xxvi. 4. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.'

(2.) God has promised a good hope of eternal life, in 2 Thes. ii. 16. 'Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts.' And, in Rom. xv. 4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.'

(3.) God has promised spiritual joy to his people, in Psal. lxiv. 10. 'The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.' And, in Psal. xcvii. 11, 12. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.'

Here we shall consider a believer, when drawing nigh to God in prayer, as depressed and bowed in his own spirit, and hardly able to speak a word to him in his own behalf, as the Psalmist says, in Psal. lxxvii. 3, 4. *I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed. I am so troubled that I cannot speak;* and how he may receive great advantage from those promises which he will find in the word of God; as,

(1st,) When he complains of the wickedness, hardness and perverseness of his heart; in this case God has promised, in Ezek. xi. 19. 'I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh.' And, in Jer. xxiii. 29. 'Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.'

(2d,) When a believer is sensible of his ignorance, or, at least, that his knowledge of divine truths bears no proportion to the means of grace, which he has been favoured with, and that he is often destitute of spiritual wisdom, to direct his way, and carry him through the difficulties he often meets with, as to what concerns his temporal or spiritual affairs: There are promises suited to this case, in Prov. ii. 3—6. 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

‘ if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasures ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord ; and find the knowledge of God.’ And in James i. 5. ‘ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him.’

(3d,) If they complain of the weakness of their memories, that they cannot retain the truths of God when they hear them ; Christ has promised, in John xiv. 26. that the Holy Ghost shall *teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance.*

(4th,) If they complain of their unthankfulness, or that they have not hearts disposed to praise God for the mercies they receive, he has promised, in Isa. 21. *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.* And, in Psal. cxl. 14. *Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name, the upright shall dwell in thy presence.*

(5th,) There are many who are not altogether destitute of hope that they have the truth of grace, but yet are filled with trouble, as apprehending that they do not make those advances, in grace, as they ought, but seem to be at a stand, which they can reckon little other than going backward, and they dread the consequences thereof ; such may take encouragement from those promises that respect a believer’s growing in grace ; as it is said, in John viii. 7. *Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase.* And, in Isa. xl. 29, 31. *He giveth power to the faint ; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.* And if they complain of their unprofitableness under the means of grace, and not receiving any spiritual advantage by the various dispensations of providence which they are under ; there is a promise adapted to this case, in Isa. xlvi. 17. *Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.*

(6th) Are they afraid that they shall fall away after having made a long profession of religion ? There is a promise which our Saviour himself took encouragement from, though never liable to any fear of this nature, which a believer may apply to himself, as affording relief against these fears and discouragements, in Psal. xvi. 8. ‘ I have set the Lord always before me ; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.’ And there is another which is more directly applicable to this case, in 1 Cor. i. 8. ‘ Who shall also confirm you unto the end that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord

‘Jesus Christ.’ And if he is fallen, and, at the same time, afraid that he shall never be able to rise again, and recover what he has lost, there is another promise in Psal. xxxvi. 24, 28. ‘Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints.’ And God also says, in Heb. xiii. 5. ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’

(7th,) If a believer be under divine desertion, which he may be, and yet kept from apostacy; if he is mourning after the Lord, and earnestly desiring that he would return to him; he may take encouragement from that promise in Psal. xlii. 5. ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.’ And, in Jer. xxxi. 13, 14. ‘Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: For I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord.’

(8th,) Is he cast down under a sense of the guilt of sin, and afraid of the punishment that will ensue? there are many promises in the word of God that respect the forgiveness of sin, in Psal. ciii. 3. ‘Who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases.’ And, in Psal. cxxx. 4. ‘There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.’ And, in Isa. xliii. 25. ‘I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.’

(9th,) Is a believer afraid of the last enemy, death, by reason of the fear whereof he is all his life-time subject to bondage: Heb. ii. 15. and Psal. xlviii. 14. ‘This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.’ And, in Psal. xxiii. 4. ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.’ And, in Psal. xxxvii. 37. ‘Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.’ Thus we have considered the promises of God as suited to every condition, and, consequently, as affording matter of encouragement to us in drawing nigh to him in prayer.

5. Those reproofs for sins committed, and threatenings which are contained in the word of God, as a means to deter from committing them, may be improved for our direction in prayer.

(1.) As we are hereby induced to hate sin, beg strength to subdue and mortify it, and deprecate the wrath and judgments of God against those that commit it.



(2.) We are hereby led to see our desert of punishment, while we confess ourselves to be sinners, and to bless God that he has not inflicted it upon us; but especially if he has given us ground of hope that he has delivered us from that condemnation which was due to us for sin.

(3.) They will be of use to us in prayer, as we are thereby led to have an awful sense of the holiness and justice of God, and to draw nigh to him with fear and trembling, lest we should provoke his wrath by our unbecoming behaviour in his presence, and thereby bring on ourselves a curse instead of a blessing.

6. The word of God is of use for our direction in prayer, as it contains many examples of the performance of this duty in a right manner by the saints, whose graces, and the manner in which they have drawn nigh to God, are proposed for our imitation in this duty: Thus we read of Jacob's wrestling with God, and his great importunity, when it is said, in Hos. xii. 4. 'He had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him;' as referring to what is mentioned in Gen. xxxii. 26, 28. 'The angel,' that is, Christ, says, 'let me go, for the day breaketh,' *q. d.* cease thy importunity, which thou hast maintained to the breaking of the day; during which time I have given thee no encouragement that I will grant thy request. Jacob persists in his resolution, and says, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;' that is, I will not leave off importuning thee, till thou givest me a gracious answer: Upon which, our Saviour says, 'as a prince hast thou power with God,' that is, with me, 'and with men,' to wit, with Esau thy brother, 'and hast prevailed:' So that he shall do thee no hurt, in ver. 28. but his heart shall be turned toward thee.

Again, we read of Abraham's humility in prayer, when he says, in Gen. xviii. 27. 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.' And, in ver. 30. 'Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak.'

We also read of David's sincerity, in Psal. xvii. 1. 'Attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips;' and of Hezekiah's addressing himself to God with tears in his sickness; upon which, he immediately received a gracious answer, in Isa. xxxviii 3, 5. and when he was recovered, he gives praise to God, in ver. 19. 'The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day: The Father to the children shall make known thy truth.'

We have an instance of Jonah's faith in prayer, when his disobedience to the divine command, had brought him into the utmost distress, in Jonah ii. 2, 4. 'Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.'

We have also an instance of Daniel's drawing nigh to God with an uncommon reverence, and awful fear of his divine Majesty, and an account of the manner in which he addresses himself to him, with confession of those sins which Israel had been guilty of, in Dan. ix. 4, 5. 'I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant, and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments: We have sinned, and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.' And we have this humble confession and supplication, continued to ver. 19. and then an account of the success thereof, in the gracious answer that God sent him by an angel from heaven.

We also read of Joshua's interceding for Israel, when he 'fell upon his face before the ark of the Lord, with his clothes rent,' Josh. vii. 6. and we have the plea that he makes use of in ver. 9. 'What wilt thou do unto thy great name.'

We have also an instance of fervency in Moses, (when pleading for the people, after they had worshipped the golden calf,) who prefers God's glory to his own happiness; and had rather have no name in the church, or be *blotted out of the book which God had written*, than that his *wrath should wax hot against Israel, to consume them*; of which we have an account in Exod. xxxiii. 10, 11, 31, 32. (a)

There are many other instances of this nature mentioned in scripture; which, for brevity sake, I pass over; and, indeed, the whole book of the Lamentations is of use to direct us in prayer, under pressing afflictions, either feared or undergone; and the book of Psalms is a directory for prayer to the believer, suited to every condition which he may be supposed to be in, and of praise for mercies of all kinds, whether temporal or spiritual. And the same may be said of many other parts of scripture.

From what has been said concerning the word of God being a direction to us in prayer, we may infer,

(1.) That, as reading the scriptures in our families and closets, is a great help to raise our affections, and bring us into a praying frame: So the application of scripture-doctrines and examples to our own case, will supply us with fit matter and expressions upon all occasions, when we draw nigh to God in this duty.

(2.) The pretence of some that they know not how to pray, or that they cannot do it without a prescribed form, arises, for the most part, from an unacquaintedness with, or a neglect to study the scriptures, to answer this end.

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(a) Vide ante vol. I. p. 19. in note.

(3.) Since the word of God is a directory for prayer, we ought not to affect modes of expression, or human strains of rhetoric, which are not deduced from, or agreeable to scripture; but, on the other hand, we are to use such a simplicity of style, and spirituality of expression, as we find contained therein; especially in those parts thereof, as are more directly subservient to this duty.

(4.) It will be of very great use for us sometimes, in the course of our reading scripture, especially in private, to turn what we read into prayer, though it do not contain in itself the form of a prayer; as when we read of the presumptuous sins committed by some, and the visible marks of God's displeasure that ensued hereupon, we ought to lift up our hearts to him, to keep us from them; or, if we have reason to charge ourselves as guilty of them, that we may be humbled, and obtain forgiveness from him. And when we read, the excellent characters of some of the saints, in scripture, we ought to pray that God would enable us to be followers of them herein; or when, in some parts thereof, believers are represented as praying for particular mercies, we ought, at the same time, to lift up our hearts to God for the same: This will be a means, not only to furnish us with matter and proper expressions in prayer; but to excite our affections when we engage in this duty, in those stated times which are set apart for it. This leads us to consider,

III. That there is a special rule of direction contained in that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called *the Lord's prayer*. This prayer is mentioned only by two of the evangelists, viz. Matthew, in chap. vi. 8, —13. and Luke, in chap. xi. 2, 3, 4. in which we may observe, that though there be a perfect harmony between them, as there is between all other parts of scripture, as to the matter or sense of them; yet it is obvious to all who compare them together, that there is some difference as to the mode of expression; particularly as to the *fourth* and *fifth* petition, (and that not only in the translation, as being sufficiently just, but in the original) which there would not have been, had it been designed for a form of prayer.

1. In the fourth petition, Luke teaches us to say, *Give us day by day our daily bread*: Whereas, in Matthew, it is expressed, *Give us this day our daily bread*, in which there are different ideas contained in the respective words. This is very common, when the same sense, for substance, is laid down in different parts of scripture. (a) *Give us this day our daily bread*, contains a petition for what we want at present; and, *Give us*

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(a) The petition in Luke offered daily, is equivalent to that in Matthew.

*this, day by day*, implies, that these wants will daily recur upon us, in which it will be necessary to desire a supply from God; and therefore, if both these accounts of this petition be compared together, we are hereby directed to pray, Lord, give us the blessings which we want at present; and let these wants be daily supplied, as we shall stand in need of a supply from thee. (a)

2. In the fifth petition, Luke directs us to pray, *Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us*: Whereas, in Matthew, the expression is very different, viz. *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*.

3. The evangelist Luke leaves out the doxology, *For, thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen*; which Matthew adds.

From hence, I conceive, it may be inferred, that our Saviour's design, in dictating this prayer to his people, was not that they should confine themselves wholly to the mode of expression used therein, without the least variation; for then, doubtless, the two Evangelists would have laid it down in the very same words; but he rather designed it as a directory respecting the matter of prayer.

I am sensible it will be objected to this, that the preface, which Luke prefixes to it, is, *when we pray, say, Our Father, &c.* which seems to intimate that these very words should be used, and no other: But to this it may be replied, that the evangelist Matthew, who beyond dispute, laid down this prayer more fully than Luke does, says, by way of preface to it, *After this manner pray ye*; which seems to be an intimation that it was designed rather to be a directory, as to the matter of prayer, than a form of words to be used without the least variation; and therefore I cannot but think, that what Luke says, *when you pray, say, &c.* imports nothing else but, *pray after this manner*.

It farther appears, that our Saviour principally designed this prayer as a directory, respecting the matter of our petitions, rather than a form; because it does not explicitly contain all the parts of prayer, nor particularly, confession of sin, or thankful acknowledgment of mercies. I say, it does not contain these explicitly, but only implicitly, as a deduction, or inference from the petitions themselves; as when we say, *Forgive us our debts*, or sins, this supposes that we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners. It cannot be denied, but that there are some expressions which contain matter of thanksgiving; as when we pray, *Hallowed be thy name*, it implies, a thankful acknowledgment of all those instances in which God has sanctified his name, as well as a desire that he would do it, *q. d.*

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(a) *known* is found only in this prayer, and rather means *necessary*.

thou hast, in the various dispensations of thy providence ; and in all thine holy institutions, set forth the glory of thy perfections that thou mayest be adored and magnified by thy creatures ; this we own with thankfulness at the same time that we desire the continuance thereof. And when we pray, *Give us daily bread* ; we do, in effect, acknowledge the bounty of his providence, from whence we receive all the comforts of life, and the large share thereof, which he has communicated to us, whereby our wants have hitherto been supplied. This, I say, is an implicit direction for thanksgiving. But if our Saviour had designed that it should be a perfect form of words, to be used without varying in the least from them, he would have given us some more full and direct account of what sins we are to acknowledge, and what mercies we are to thank him for, which is more plainly contained in some other scriptures, than it can be supposed to be in this prayer ; therefore, it seems to be principally designed as a rule for our direction what we are to ask for ; or how that part of prayer, which includes in it petition, ought to be performed, agreeably to the mind and will of God.

Moreover, there is no explicit mention of the Mediator, in whose name we are to pray ; nor of his obedience, sufferings, or intercession, on which the efficacy of our prayers is founded, which our faith is to have a great regard unto. These things therefore are to be supplied by what we find in other parts of scripture, all which, taken together, give us a perfect directory for prayer ; though neither this, nor any other prayers used in scripture, sufficiently appear to have been designed as a form of words which we are to confine ourselves to, without the least variation from them.

As to what is observed in the latter of the answers, under our present consideration, viz. that the Lord's prayer is not only for direction, as a pattern, but may be used as a prayer, provided it be done in a right manner. It is granted that the Lord's prayer is of use, as a pattern and rule for our direction, in common with all other prayers contained in scripture ; but the main difficulty relating to this matter, is, whether our Saviour designed that his disciples, and the church, in all following ages, should confine themselves to the words thereof, so far as that the mode of expression should not be, in the least, altered, or any thing added to the petitions contained therein, how agreeable soever it be to the sense, and words of scripture. This does not seem to have been his intention therein ; and, as it will not be denied by any, that every one of the petitions contained in it, may be interspersed and joined with other petitions to God in prayer, so, when this has been done, or, at least, the sense thereof expressed in other words, it will

be very hard to prove that it is absolutely necessary that these petitions should be recollected, and prayed over again, in the same method in which they are laid down in this prayer, barely for the sake of our making use of it as a form ; especially if this is not expressly commanded by our Saviour, as it does not sufficiently appear to be, if what was before observed be true, that those words, *When we pray, say, Our Father, &c.* implies nothing else but, *pray after this manner.*

However, I would be very far from censuring or blaming the practice observed by many of the reformed churches, who conclude their *ex tempore*, or premeditated prayers with it, provided it be done with understanding, reverence, and suitable acts of faith, as any other petition contained in scripture may be made use of by us in prayer ; not only in words agreeable thereunto, but in the express words thereof. The principal thing that I would militate against, is not so much the using the words, as doing this in a formal way, supposing that the bare recital of them doth, as it were, sanctify our other prayers ; which, though very agreeable to the sense thereof, are, as some suppose, rendered so incomplete, that they will hardly be regarded by God without it. And I cannot but conclude the Papists highly to blame, who think the frequent repetition of it, though in a tongue unknown to the common people, is not only necessary, but, in some measure, meritorious. And the practice of some ignorant superstitious persons, who think that it may be made use of as a charm ; and that the words thereof repeated, as the Jews of old did their Phylacteries, as a means to drive away evil spirits, is not only to be disapproved, but it is a vile instance of profaneness, very remote from the design of our Saviour in giving it.

QUEST. CLXXXVIII. *Of how many parts doth the Lord's prayer consist ?*

ANSW. The Lord's prayer consists of three parts, a preface, petitions, and a conclusion.

QUEST. CLXXXIX. *What doth the preface of the Lord's prayer teach us ?*

ANSW. The preface of the Lord's prayer [contained in these words, *Our Father which art in heaven*] teacheth us, when we pray, to draw near to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and our interest therein, with reverence, and all other child-like dispositions, heavenly affections, and due ap-



prehensions of his Sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension ; as also to pray with, and for others.

**I**N this prayer we are taught to begin our prayers with a preface, and therein to make an explicit mention of the name of God, and some of his divine perfections. The preface to this prayer is contained in these words ; *Our Father which art in heaven.* In which we may observe, that we are to draw near to God with reverence, and suitable apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and other divine perfections, and with an holy confidence of his fatherly goodness ; and that we are to pray with, and for others, which may be inferred from his being styled, *Our Father* ; by which we are instructed to begin our prayers with some expressions of reverence, agreeable to the nature of the duty that we are engaged in, whereby we express the sense we have of his essential or relative glory, of which we have various instances in scripture, wherein God's people, in addressing themselves to him, have made mention of his glorious names, titles, and attributes, in variety of expressions. Thus David, in his Psalms, that contain the matter and form of prayers, sometimes begins them with the name of God, to whom they are directed ; as when he says, *God be merciful unto us, and bless us, &c.* Psal. lxxvii. 1. And elsewhere, *O God ! thou art my God,* Psal. lxxiii. 1. And sometimes he makes mention of his name *Jehovah* ; which we translate *Lord* : Thus he says, *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, &c.* Psal. xxxviii. 1. And elsewhere, *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,* Psal. xviii. 1. And, *O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth,* Psal. viii. 1. And Solomon begins his prayer at the consecration of the temple ; *Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in heaven above, or earth beneath ; who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart,* 1 Kings viii. 23. And Ezra begins his prayer, *O my God ! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God !* Ezra ix. 6. And Daniel expresses himself thus, in the preface to his prayer, *O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant, and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments,* Dan. ix. 4. These are all expressions, that denote reverence, and adoration ; which, together with other instances of the like nature, are of use for our direction, as to what respects the preface, or beginning of our prayers to God ; but the preface to the Lord's prayer is somewhat different ; in which we are taught,

1. To address ourselves to God as a Father ; which relation includes in it,

(1.) Something common to mankind in general ; in which

respect we are to adore him as our Creator, our Owner, and Benefactor, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*, Acts xvii. 28. as the prophet says, *Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?* Mal. ii. 10. And elsewhere it is said, *He formeth the spirit of man within him*, Zech. xii. 1. upon which account he is called, *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, Numb. xvi. 22. and, *the Father of spirits*, Heb. xii. 9.

(2.) God being a Father to his people, sometimes denotes that external covenant-relation which they stand in to him, as a people called by his name, favoured with the means of grace, and as such, the objects of that care and goodness, which he is pleased to extend to those whom he governs by laws given by special revelation from heaven, and encourages to wait on him in those ordinances, in which they may hope for his presence, and also promises all saving blessings to those that give up themselves to him by faith. In this sense we are to understand those scriptures, in which God says, *Israel is my son, even my first-born*, Exod. iv. 22. And, *I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me*, Isa. i. 2. And, *Wilt thou not, from this time cry to me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth*, Jer. iii. 4.

(3.) The relation which God stands in to his people, as a Father, is sometimes taken in the highest sense, as implying in it discriminating grace, or special love, which he is pleased to extend to the heirs of salvation. Thus he is called so by right of redemption; in which respect Christ is styled, *The everlasting Father*, Isa. ix. 6. as being the Head and Redeemer of his people. And the church says, *Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting*, chap. lxiii. 16. And believers are called his children by regeneration; in which respect they are said to be *born of God*, John i. 13. and to be *made partakers of a divine*, 2 Pet. i. 4. that is, an holy and spiritual nature, which had its rise from God, when he was pleased to instamp his image upon them, consisting in holiness and righteousness. They are also called the children of God by adoption; thus he is said to have *predestinated them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself*, Eph. i. 5. and they are said to *receive the adoption of sons*, Gal. iv. 5. and as such, have a right to the inheritance of children, Rom. viii. 17. compared with Col. i. 12.

These various senses in which God is said to be a Father to man, may serve for our direction when we style him, *Our Father*, in prayer. Unregenerate persons, when they pray to God, can ascend no higher than what is contained in their relation to him as a God of nature, and of providence; who are obliged to adore him for the blessings which they have received from him, as the effects of common bounty, which include

in them all the blessings which belong to this life, together with his patience, forbearance, and long-suffering, which delays to inflict the punishment that sin deserves. Therefore, when they say, *Our Father*, they acknowledge that they derive their being from him, and though they cannot lay claim to the benefits of Christ's redemption, yet they confess their obligations to God as their Creator; and consider him as having given them souls capable of spiritual blessings, and themselves as daily receiving the good things of this life from him, and dependent on him for those things that tend to the comfort and support of life. They also stand in need of those blessings which are suited to the nature of the soul, and consequently beg that they may not remain destitute of those things that may conduce to their everlasting welfare; and therefore they may use the Psalmist's words, *Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me: Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments*, Psal. cxix. 73.

As for those who are God's children, by an external covenant-relation, there is something more implied therein, than barely their being creatures; for herein they are led to adore him for those discoveries that he has made in the gospel, of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, who calls and invites sinners to come to him, and encourages them to hope, that those who are enabled to do so in a right manner, he will, in no wise, cast out; therefore, when they call upon God as their Father in prayer, it is, in effect, to say; Lord, we cannot conclude ourselves to be thy children, as redeemed, effectually called and sanctified; nor can we lay claim to the inheritance laid up for thy saints in heaven; yet we are encouraged to wait on thee in the ordinances of thine appointment, and to hope for thy special presence therein, whereby they may be made effectual for our salvation. We are, indeed, destitute of special grace, and cannot conclude that we have a right to the saving blessings of the covenant; yet, through thy great goodness, we still enjoy the means of grace. We have not been admitted to partake of Christ's fulness, nor to eat of the bread of life; yet we are thankful for those blessings of thy house, which thou art pleased to continue to us; and since thou still includest us in the number of those who are thy children as favoured with the gospel, we humbly take leave, upon this account, to call thee our Father, and to wait and hope for thy salvation, and continue to implore that grace from thee, which will give us a right to the best of blessings that we stand in need of. (a)

As for those who are God's children in the highest sense, by

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(a) Qu. For *Father* is designed in its appellative sense, and *our* as a covenant-plea.

redemption, regeneration, and adoption, they may draw nigh to him, with an holy boldness ; for these have, as the apostle expresseth it, the *Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father* ; they have reason to adore him for privileges of the highest nature, that he has conferred upon them, and to encourage themselves that he will bestow upon them all the blessings they stand in need of as to this, or a better world. These may draw nigh to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and their interest therein ; which they ought to take notice of and improve, in order to their drawing nigh to him, in a right manner, in prayer, as well as to induce them to behave themselves, in the whole course of their conversation, as those who are taken into this honourable relation to him. Accordingly,

[1.] This should raise their admiring thoughts of him, that they, who were, by nature, strangers and enemies to him, should be admitted to partake of this inestimable privilege ; as the apostle says, *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !* 1 John iii. 1.

[2.] We should also take encouragement from hence, to hope that he will hear and answer our prayers, though very imperfect, so far as it may tend to his glory and our real advantage. Thus our Saviour says, *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him ?* Matt. vii. 11. Do we pray for spiritual blessings, such as the increase of grace, strength against corruption, and to be kept from temptation, or falling by it ? we have ground to conclude that these shall be granted us, inasmuch as they are purchased for us by Christ, promised in the covenant of grace, as we have the earnest and first-fruits of the Spirit in our hearts, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. And when we pray for temporal blessings, we have reason to hope they shall be granted, if they be necessary for us, since our Saviour says, *Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things,* Matt. vi. 32.

[3.] This should excite in us those child-like dispositions, which are agreeable to this relation, not only when we draw nigh to God in prayer, but in the whole conduct of our lives. And it includes in it,

1st, Humility and reverence, which is not only becoming those who have an interest in his love, and a liberty of access into his presence, with hope of acceptance in his sight ; but it is what we are obliged to, as his peculiar people, and a branch of that honour which is due to him as our God and Father. Thus he says, by the prophet, *A son honoureth his father,* Mal. i. 6. whereby he intimates that this is the character and disposition of those that stand in the relation of children to

him. And the apostle argues from the less to the greater, when he says, that *we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits*, Heb. xii. 9:

2dly, Patience under rebukes, considering our proneness to go astray, whereby we not only deserve them, but they are rendered necessary; and especially when we consider that they flow from love, and are designed for our good; as the apostle says, *Whom the Lord loveth he chastneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*, ver. 6.

3dly, Another child-like disposition is being grieved for our Father's frowns; especially that we have incurred his displeasure by our misbehaviour towards him; and it contains in it a readiness to confess our faults, and a carefulness to avoid them for the future.

4thly, Contentment with the provision of our Father's house, whatever it be. We shall never, indeed, have the least cause to complain of scarcity, as the returning prodigal in the parable says, that even the *hired servants of his father, had bread enough, and to spare*, Luke xv. 17. It can hardly be supposed that he who is at the fountain head, can perish for thirst; nevertheless, though we are not straitened in God, yet we are often straitened in our bowels, through the weakness of our faith, when we are not inclined to receive what God holds forth to us in the gospel; and then we are discontented and uneasy, while the blame lies at our own door; whereas, if we behaved ourselves as the children of such a Father, we should not only be pleased with, but constantly adore and live upon that fulness of grace that there is in Christ; and whether he is pleased to give us more or less of the blessings of common providence, we should learn, *in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content*, Phil. iv. 11.

5thly, Obedience to a father's commands, without disputing his authority, or right to govern us, is another child-like disposition. Thus when we draw nigh to God as to our Father, we are to express a readiness to do whatever he requires, whereby we not only approve ourselves subjects under a law, but, as the apostle styles it, *Obedient children*, as being *holy in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. i. 14, 15.

6thly, Another disposition of children is, that they have a fervent zeal for their father's honour, and cannot bear to hear him reproached without the highest resentment. Thus the children of God, how much soever they may be concerned about their own affairs, when injuriously treated by the world, are always ready to testify their utmost dislike of every thing that reflects dishonour on him, or his ways.

7thly, Another child-like disposition is love, which the rela-

tion of a father engages to. Thus when we draw nigh to God as our Father, we express our love to him, which is founded in his divine excellencies, which render him the object of the highest delight and esteem.

*8thly*, He that has a child-like disposition, retains a grateful sense of the obligations that he is under to his Father. Thus we ought to be duly sensible of all the favours which we have received from God, which are more than can be numbered; the contrary hereunto, is reckoned the basest ingratitude and disingenuity, altogether unbecoming the temper of children. Thus Moses says to Israel, *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father who hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?* Deut. xxxii. 6. A believer's obligations to God are so very great, that he cannot look back upon his former state, or consider what he was, how vile and unworthy of any regard from him, how miserable and unable to help himself, when he first had compassion on him, without seeing himself under the strongest engagements to be entirely, and for ever, his; which is a becoming behaviour towards such a Father.

*9thly*, Love to all that are related to us as children of the same Father, is another child-like disposition. In like manner our love to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, is a temper becoming the children of God; and, indeed, it is no other than a loving God in them, as we behold his image instamped upon them; and hereby we express the high esteem we have for regenerating grace, whereby God is denominated our common Father; and we, being acted by the same principle, are obliged and inclined to love as brethren. Thus they who love God, are induced to love his children, as the apostle says, *Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him*, 1 John v. 1. and he also assigns this as an evidence that *we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren*, chap. iii. 14. Thus concerning our drawing nigh to God, as to a Father, as we are taught to do in this prayer.

2. We are directed, in this prayer, to draw nigh to God, as being in heaven; which is the most glorious part of the frame of nature, in which his power, wisdom, and goodness is eminently displayed, as he designed it to be an eternal habitation for the best of creatures, to whom he would discover more of his glory than to any others; and in this respect it is called his *throne*, Acts vii. 49. And this leads us,

(1.) To have high and awful thoughts of the majesty and greatness of God, whom all the hosts of heaven worship, with the utmost reverence, and are satisfied with the immense treasure of his goodness. We therefore take occasion from hence to admire his infinite condescension, that he will look upon



creatures here below ; thus Solomon, in his prayer says, *Will God, indeed, dwell on the earth ? behold the heaven, and the heavens of heavens cannot contain thee*, 1 Kings viii. 27. will he therefore look down upon those, who are so mean, deformed, and destitute of his image, as we are, who dwell in houses of clay, and deserve to be banished out of his sight ?

(2.) It should also be improved by us to teach us humility and modesty, in our conceptions and discourse, concerning God, and divine things : It is but a little that we know of the affairs of the upper world, and the way and manner in which God is pleased to manifest himself to his saints and angels there ; and we know much less of his divine perfections, which the inhabitants of heaven adore, being sensible of the infinite distance they stand at from him, as creatures, upon which account they cannot comprehend, or find out the Almighty to perfection ; and shall we pretend to search out the secrets of his wisdom, or express ourselves in prayer, as though we were speaking to one that was our equal, or could fathom the infinite depths of his unsearchable counsels ? Thus Solomon's advice may be well adapted to this case, *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God ; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth ; therefore let thy words be few*, 1 Kings viii. 27. We are not to think that we may say what we please, or be rash and inconsiderate in what we say, when we are *before the Lord ; for he is in heaven*. And when it is farther inferred, that *therefore our words should be few*, that is, we should not think that the efficacy of our prayers depends upon the multitude of our words ; or if we speak more or less to God, our expressions ought not to be bold, rash, hasty, or inconsiderate, but with a becoming decency and reverence, as those who are speaking to the majesty of heaven.

(3.) It should put us upon meditating frequently on the glory of the heavenly state, as those who hope at last, to be joined with that happy and numerous assembly, who are, in God's immediate presence, in heaven : and therefore our conversation should be there ; and we should profess ourselves to be sojourners here on earth, seeking a better country, looking and waiting for the glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour ; and hoping, that when he comes, he will receive us to heaven, where our hearts are at present, as our treasure is there.

3. We are, in this prayer, farther taught, that it is our duty to pray with, and for others, as we say, *Our Father* : Hereby we signify our relation to, and concern for, all the members of Christ's mystical body ; therefore, if we do not join with others in prayer, we are to have them upon our hearts, who are the

objects of Christ's special love and care. This argues, that we have a sympathy with all those who are exposed to the same wants and miseries with ourselves; and we take a great deal of delight in considering them as subjects of the same common Lord, joining in the same profession with ourselves; concerning whom, we desire and hope that we shall be glorified together.

Moreover, if we join with others in prayer, so that the whole assembly make their supplications by one that is their mouth, to God; this is what we call social worship: Therefore it is our duty to pray with, as well as for others; and in this case we must take heed that nothing be contained in united prayer, but what the whole assembly may join in, as being expressive of their faith, desires, or experiences; otherwise there cannot be that beautiful harmony therein, such as the nature and design of the duty we are jointly engaged in, calls for: and this is agreeable to social or united prayers, in which all the petitions are to be adapted to the particular case of every one who addresses himself to God, how numerous soever the worshipping assembly may be; and therefore we are obliged to make use of that mode of expression, in which we are taught to say, *Our Father*.

Thus our Saviour directs us how we should begin our prayers to God; and, inasmuch as this ought to be reduced to practice, I shall give a summary account of what is contained in this preface; that we may be furnished with matter taken from thence, in order to our addressing ourselves to God in prayer, in a way agreeable thereunto, when we come into his presence with such a frame of spirit as the importance of the duty requires; accordingly we are to express ourselves to this purpose, "O our God, we desire to draw nigh to thee with  
" a becoming reverence, and an awful sense of thine infinite  
" perfections: When we consider thee as a jealous God, and  
" ourselves as sinful, guilty creatures, we might well be afraid  
" to come before thee; but thou hast encouraged us to ap-  
" proach thy presence as to a Father, in, and through the  
" merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ; and there-  
" fore we come with an humble boldness before thy throne of  
" grace, confessing that though we are called thy children, we  
" have been very undutiful and rebellious against thee, and  
" therefore unworthy of that relation or of the inheritance  
" which thou hast laid up for those whom thou hast ordained  
" to eternal life. Thou, O Lord, hast established thy throne  
" in the heavens, where there is an innumerable company of  
" angels and spirits of just men made perfect, who all behold  
" thy face, and are made completely blessed in thine imme-  
" diate presence: As for us, we dwell in houses of clay; but

“ we earnestly beg that we may be made meet for, and then  
 “ admitted into that happy society, that we may worship thee  
 “ in a more perfect manner than we are capable of doing in  
 “ this imperfect state. May all the powers and faculties of  
 “ our souls be renewed, and influenced by thy holy Spirit, that  
 “ we may have our conversation in heaven, whilst we are here  
 “ below, and in all things, may be enabled to approve ourselves  
 “ thy children, have a constant sense of duty, and the manifold  
 “ obligations thou hast laid us under, that we may love, de-  
 “ light in, and submit to thee in all things, and have a fervent  
 “ zeal for the honour of thy name as becomes thy children,  
 “ that we, together with all thy faithful servants, may be under  
 “ thy safe protection here, and be received to thy glory here-  
 “ after.”

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QUEST. CXI. *What do we pray for in the first petition?*

ANSW. In the first petition [which is, *Hallowed be thy Name,*] acknowledging the utter inability and indisposition that is in ourselves and all men to honour God aright, we pray that God would, by his grace, enable and incline us, and others, to know, to acknowledge, and highly to esteem him, his titles, attributes, ordinances, word, works, and whatsoever he is pleased to make himself known by, and to glorify him in thought, word, and deed; that he would prevent and remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaneness, and whatsoever is dishonourable to him; and, by his over-ruling providence, direct and dispose of all things to his own glory.

**H**AVING considered the preface to the Lord's prayer; the next part of which it consists, is petitions; and these are six, which are laid down in this method.

1. We are taught to pray for what concerns God's glory, which is the highest and most valuable end; and therefore ought first to be prayed for: And this is the subject-matter of the three first petitions.

2. We are directed to pray for what respects our own advantage, which is contained in the three last petitions, in which we are directed to pray for outward blessings, as in the fourth petition, and then for spiritual, without which outward blessings would afford us no relish or savour, nor render us truly happy. These spiritual blessings include in them either forgiveness of sin, and this we pray for in the fifth petition; or our being sanctified and delivered from the prevalency of corruption and temptation, together with all the evils that sin exposes us to; this we pray for in the sixth petition. That which

we are more particularly to consider in this answer, is, what we are taught to pray for in the first petition, which is contained in these words, *Hallowed be thy name*. By the name of God we are to understand every thing, by which he is pleased to make himself known to his creatures, as when he discovers himself in his divine perfections, which are either essential or personal, absolute or relative; and in his glorious titles, as the Lord of Hosts, the God and Rock of Israel, the hope of Israel, the God that cannot lye, the Father of mercies, the God of all grace and glory, the preserver of man; which have all a tendency to raise in us the highest veneration for, and esteem of him. He has also made himself known by his ordinances, words, and works: These are the subject-matter of this petition; and when we pray that they may be sanctified, we are not to understand hereby that they may be made holy; but that the holiness and glory thereof may be demonstrated by him, and that we may be enabled to adore and magnify him agreeably thereunto.

Now the name of God may be said to be sanctified either by himself or by his people in different respects; accordingly,

I. We pray that God would sanctify, that is, demonstrate the glory of his own name, or proclaim and make it visible to the world, so as to excite that adoration and esteem which is due to him. His name, indeed, has been eminently glorified in all ages, in the various methods of his providence and grace; whereby his power, wisdom, and goodness have been illustrated in the eyes of angels and men; and, in all his works, he has appeared to be a God of infinite holiness: We therefore pray that he would continue to glorify these perfections, and enable us to improve the displays thereof to our spiritual advantage.

This is a subject of the highest importance, without which we cannot give to God the glory due unto his name; therefore, as praise is joined with prayer, it is necessary for us to take a view of the various ways by which God has manifested the glory of his holiness. We might here consider how he did this in his creating man at first, without the least blemish or disposition in his nature to sin, and enstamped his own image upon him, which principally consisted in holiness, which was the greatest internal beauty and ornament that he could be endowed with.

But that which we shall principally consider, is, how the holiness of God is demonstrated in his dealings with fallen man. His suffering sin to enter into the world, was not inconsistent with the holiness of his nature, since his providence, as has been observed elsewhere, was not conversant about it, by

bringing any under a natural necessity of sinning; and therefore there is not the least ground to charge him, with being the author of sin. We now proceed to shew how the holiness of God was glorified in the dispensations of his providence towards fallen man, and in the methods he took in order to his recovery.

1. The holiness of God was glorified, or he sanctified his great name, in the dispensations of his providence towards fallen man, before he gave him any hope of salvation. It cannot be supposed that this rebellion against, and apostacy from God, should not be highly resented by him; accordingly we read of his proceeding against the rebel as a judge, charging his crime upon him, and passing sentence pursuant to the demerit of his sin; and all the miseries that we are exposed to, either in this life, or that which is to come, are the result of the display of his holiness, as a sin-revenging Judge. As soon as ever our first parents sinned against him, he charged the guilt thereof on their consciences, and thereby filled them with a dread of his wrath: Hence proceeded an inclination to flee from his presence; and when they heard the voice of the Lord coming to call them to an account for what they had done, they were afraid.

This is God's usual method in dealing with sinful creatures: He first convinces them of sin by the law, and awakens the conscience, so that his terrors are set in array against it round about, before he speaks good and comfortable words by the gospel: And by this means he sanctifies his name, and thereby discovers his infinite hatred of all sin: but we shall principally consider,

2. How God glorifies his holiness in the method he has taken to deliver man from that guilt and misery, under which he had brought himself. The terms of reconciliation and salvation, were such as tended to secure the glory of his justice; and therefore he insisted on a satisfaction to be given, without making the least abatement of any part of the debt of punishment that was due for our sin; and accordingly *he spared not his own Son*, Rom. viii. 32. but delivered him over unto death, and obliged him to drink the bitterest part of that cup which was most formidable to nature, and which, had it been possible, he would fain have been excused from drinking; therefore he is represented, by one of the evangelists, as praying, that God the Father would *take this cup from him*, Mark xiv. 35, 36. and by another, that he would *save him from this hour*, John xii. 27. Nevertheless, he expresses the utmost resignation to the divine will; and being sensible that this was an expedient to glorify the holiness of God, he does, as it were, give a check to the voice of nature, and submits to bear the punishment he

came into the world to suffer, how terrible soever it might be ; and therefore says, *Father glorify thy name*, q. d. ver. 28. take what method is most expedient to demonstrate the glory of thy holiness let the whole debt be exacted on me, I am willing to pay the utmost farthing : Upon this God says, by a voice from heaven, *I have glorified it, and will glorify it again* ; that is, in every step that has been, or shall be taken, in order to the bringing about the work of redemption, I have hallowed my name, and will do it hereafter. And, in this respect, God's holiness was glorified in finishing transgression, making an end of sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and also in the impetration of redemption, by our great Mediator and Surety.

3. God has sanctified his name in all the methods which he has taken in the application of redemption, in the various dispensations of his providence and grace towards his church and people ; and in order hereunto, he has determined, that *if his children forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments ; if they break his statutes and keep not his commandments, he will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes*, Psal. lxxxix. 30, 32. And this is done to manifest the glory of his holiness : Though he is pleased to pardon their iniquity for the sake of Christ's righteousness ; yet they shall know, by experience, that he hates it ; and therefore, whatever be his designs of grace, with respect to his redeemed ones, as to the event thereof, they shall, notwithstanding, find that their sin shall not altogether go unpunished, though this punishment be not of the same kind with that which was suffered by Christ, from the hand of vindictive justice demanding satisfaction. Moreover, God has sanctified his name, in that he has connected sanctification with salvation ; therefore he has said, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. He first makes his people holy, and then happy ; every mercy that he bestows, is a motive or inducement to holiness ; and all the ordinances and means of grace are made subservient to answer this end.

Here we may take occasion to observe the various methods, whereby God has sanctified his name, in all his dealings with his church, in the various ages thereof, both before and since our Saviour's incarnation ;

(1.) Under the legal dispensation. The people, whom he chose out of all the nations of the earth, and called them by his name ; among whom he designed to magnify his perfections in such a way, as argued them to be the peculiar objects of his regard above all others, as he designed to make them high in name, in praise, and in honour ; these are styled *an holy people*, Deut. xxvi. 19. and elsewhere, *holiness unto the Lord*, Jer. ii. 3. and the wonderful things that he did for them in



destroying their enemies, when he brought them out of Egyptian bondage, gave them occasion to celebrate his name, as a God *glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders*, Exod. xv. 11. and the worship that he established among them was such; in which he expressly required holiness, both in heart and life; and when, at any time, they cast a reproach on his perfections, or defiled and debased his holy institutions, he testified his displeasure against them in the highest degree: Of this we have various instances in the judgments which he has executed on particular persons for not performing what he had commanded, with the greatest exactness, in those things which related to his worship: Thus when Nadab and Abihu *offered strange fire*, they were *devoured, before the Lord, by fire from heaven*, Lev. x. 1, 2. And, when David was bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem, we read, that Uzzah put forth his hand to take hold of it to prevent its falling, when shaken by the oxen, which he, doubtless, did with a good design, and it is therefore called an *error*, rather than a presumptuous sin; yet it is said, that *the anger of the Lord was kindled against him, so that he smote him that he died by it*, 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. this being contrary to an express law which God had given, that the sons of Kohath should *bear the ark, but they should not touch it, or any holy thing that was covered, lest they die*, Numb. iv. 15. And elsewhere we read, that some of the men of Bethshemesh, because they had *looked into the ark of the Lord, were smitten, so that fifty thousand, and threescore and ten of them died*, 1 Sam. vi. 19. inasmuch as God had forbidden that any should indulge their curiosity, so far as to look on the holy things on pain of death, Numb. iv. 20. And he also threatened the children of Israel with death, if any of them who were not appointed to minister in holy things, came nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, so as to perform that service which they were not sanctified or called to, since this was reckoned no other than an instance of profaneness in them. And if Aaron himself, whose office was to go into the holiest of all to perform the yearly service, in which he was to make atonement for the sins of the whole congregation, presumed to do this, at any other time but that day which God had appointed, he was to be punished with death, Lev. xvi. 2.

And, when any thing was brought into the worship of God, contrary to what he had instituted, which was reckoned no other than a profaning it, God hallowed his own name, by pouring forth his wrath on those who gave occasion to, or complied with it. Thus when Jeroboam, set up calves in Bethel and Dan, *made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi, ordained feasts* like those which God had appointed; and, in many other instances, corrupted his wor-

ship, whereby the people, who complied with him herein, were led aside from God, it is said, *This became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth*, 1 Kings xii. 29—33. compared with chap. xiii. 34. And when Ahaz erected an altar, according to the pattern of that which he saw at Damascus, and sacrificed to the gods of the people, from whom he had took the pattern thereof, this brought ruin on him and his kingdom, 2 Kings xvi. 10. compared with 2 Chron. xxviii. 23. And when Uzziah usurped the priest's office, by offering incense in the temple, God immediately testified his displeasure against him, by *smiting him with leprosy*; whereby he was separated from the congregation of the Lord, and rendered unfit to govern his people to the day of his death, 2 Chron. xxvi. 16, 20, 21. And when holy men, in any instance, have not sanctified his name in the eyes of the people, God has highly resented it: Thus when Moses and Aaron *spake unadvisedly with their lips*, upon which account they are said *not to sanctify the name of God at the waters of Meribah*, he tells them, that therefore they should *not bring the children of Israel into the land of Canaan, but should die in the wilderness*, Numb. xx. 12.

And, as we have many instances of the judgments of God on particular persons, for not sanctifying his name; so we have a public and visible display of his holiness, in his dealings with the whole nation of Israel, after their many revolts from him, when they served other gods, and not only corrupted, but laid aside his institutions, and were guilty of those vile abominations, which were inconsistent with the least pretensions to holiness; God sanctified his own name, not only by reproofing them by the prophets, but sending those many judgments which were the forerunners of that desolation, which they had reason to expect, and then by delivering them into the hand of those who carried them captive, Israel into Assyria, and Judah into Babylon. This leads us to consider,

(3.) How God has, and still continues to sanctify his name, under the gospel-dispensation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head and Saviour of his church, has, in his whole administration, set forth the glory of God's holiness. This appears,

[1.] In that he came into the world, with a commission from his Father, to engage in the work of our redemption; and accordingly he is said to have been *sanctified and sent into it* for this very purpose, John x. 36. And, when he entered on his public ministry, he produced his commission, and gave undeniable proofs that he was the Messiah, the person whom God the Father had *sealed*, and set over his house to manage this great affair. Every miracle which he wrought, was a divine

testimony for the confirmation of this truth, that the gospel-dispensation took its rise from Christ our great Mediator, and was a glorious display of the holiness of God; and the world could not have the least ground to think they were imposed on, when they concluded that this Jesus was he that was to come into the world (according to the predictions of all the holy prophets that went before him) to erect that dispensation in which his own and his Father's glory were eminently to shine forth, and thereby the name of God was to be hallowed in a greater degree than it had ever been before.

[2.] God sanctifies his own name under the gospel-dispensation, in raising Christ from the dead, after he had finished the work which he came into the world about; in which respect it may be said of him, that *for, or after the suffering of death, he was crowned with glory and honour*, Heb. ii. 9. and put into a capacity of applying the redemption which he had purchased, so that God the Father *glorified the Son, that the Son also might glorify him*, John xvii. 1. That this was not done till he had made a full satisfaction to the justice of God, and thereby glorified his holiness to the utmost, has been already considered; after this he entered upon his glory; and from that time the gospel-dispensation might, by way of eminency, be said to begin, upon which occasion we may apply the words of the Psalmist, 'Sing unto the Lord ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness,' Psal. xxx. 4.

[3.] God sanctified or hallowed his name in the method which he took in his dealings with the Jewish nation, after Christ's ascension into heaven, which made way for the establishment of the gospel-church, and was in itself an awful display of his holiness. It must be supposed, that the treatment, which our Saviour met with from that nation, who might be said herein to fill up the measure of their iniquities to the utmost, would be followed with some terrible displays of divine vengeance; and thus it was, as appeared by the utter ruin of their civil and religious liberties, which were the immediate consequence thereof; and this is a visible proof of the truth of the Christian religion, and a very awful instance of God's being sanctified in them.

[4.] The holiness of God farther appears in the methods which he took to propagate his gospel through the world, which was not to be done by might or power, nor by those methods of secular policy, whereby civil states are advanced; but by his Spirit, whereby they who were called, were sufficiently qualified for this important work; who preached the gospel to all nations, according to the commission that was given them, confirmed it by miracles, and were instrumental in gathering a people out of the world, that yielded themselves

willing subjects to Christ, a people called by his name, and subjected and entirely devoted to him.

[5.] The holiness of God appears in all those doctrines which were preached, on which the faith of the church is built, and those ordinances in which they were to express their subjection to Christ, and hope of salvation by him.

1st, The doctrines of the gospel are all pure and holy ; their great design is to set forth the harmony of the divine perfections, as displayed in the method of salvation by Jesus Christ ; and to induce those who are made partakers thereof, to serve him in holiness and righteousness ; and there is no gospel-doctrine that gives the least countenance, or leads to licentiousness. None have a right to claim an interest in Christ's righteousness, or to hope for that salvation which he has purchased, but they who believe, and none can be said to believe, to the saving of the soul, but they who are enabled to perform all those duties, whereby it will appear, that they are an holy, as well as an happy people.

2dly, All those ordinances which Christ has instituted in the gospel, have a tendency to set forth the holiness of God. What these are, has been considered under foregoing answers ; as also, that they were instituted by Christ, and that no creature has a right to invent any modes of worship, or make any additions to his institutions, without incurring the guilt of depraving and sullyng the beauty of gospel-worship \* ; and therefore all that I shall add under this head, is, that as these are set apart, and sanctified by God, to be means of grace, and pledges of his presence ; so they, who engage herein, are to do it with this view, that they may be made holy in all conversation, as he who hath called them is holy ; and hereby God sanctifies his own name in the dispensations of his providence and grace.

Now when we pray, *Hallowed be thy name*, with a particular view to what God does in order hereunto, we adore him with an holy trembling, when we behold the displays of his vindictive justice in punishing sin ; and if he sees it necessary to secure his own honour as the governor of the world, so that without it he would not appear to be an holy God, nor the glory of his truth in those threatenings which he has denounced against sin, discovered, we are fully satisfied that all his ways are right, as acquiescing in his providence ; and when his judgments are made manifest, we say, *Hallowed be thy name*.

However, when we put up this petition, with a particular

\* See Quest. CLIV. page 79.

view to God's executing his threatened vengeance on his enemies, several cautions are to be used. As,

1st, We are to take heed that we do not do this out of hatred to the persons of any, for even they who are the monuments of divine justice, in whom God will be glorified as a sin-revenging judge, are the objects of our compassion, as they are miserable, how much soever that sin, which is the cause thereof, is to be hated and detested by us.

2dly, We must always pray, that God would rather convert than destroy his enemies, were it consistent with his purpose, which must be accomplished.

3dly, We are never called to pray expressly for the damnation of any one, how great an enemy soever he may have been to God or us; but rather, on the other hand, that God would glorify his name in his salvation by Jesus Christ.

4thly, If we pray that God would prevent those evils, which his church is exposed to, through the power or malice of its enemies, and, in order thereunto, that he would remove them out of the way, that they may not be able to hurt them; this is to be considered only as an expedient for their safety, so that if one of the two must suffer ruin, we rather desire that it may be his enemies than his people. We should be glad if God would be pleased to bring about the welfare of his church some other way; but if not, when we pray that his name herein may be hallowed, it is principally with submission to his will, and an humble acknowledgment that all his judgments are right. Thus concerning God's sanctifying his own name, as the subject-matter of our prayer in this petition.

II. When we pray, *Hallowed be thy name*, we signify our desire that we may be enabled to glorify God in every thing whereby he makes himself known: In which there is something supposed, namely, that all men are utterly unable and disinclined, of themselves, to honour God aright, or to improve the various displays of his glory, which we behold in his word and works: This arises from the sinfulness of our nature, our alienation from, and opposition to an holy God; so that without the assistance of his Spirit, we are not able to do any thing that is good; and therefore we pray that God would make us holy, by rendering the means of grace conducive thereunto, that we may give him the glory due to his name.

But the thing more especially prayed for, with respect to ourselves and others is, that we may be enabled to act suitably to the discoveries which God has made of his divine perfections; that we may adore his wisdom, power, and goodness in all he does, and worship him in all ordinances in an holy manner, or, as the Psalmist expresses it, *Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*, Psal. xxix. 2. We are also to desire,

that all his holy institutions may be made means of grace to us, that we may be sanctified by his truth, that beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we may be transformed into his image, consisting of holiness and righteousness, that we may have an high esteem of every thing whereby he makes himself known, and glorify him in thought, word, and deed.

1. That we may never think or speak of the divine perfections, but with a becoming reverence, and suitable acts of faith, agreeably thereunto; that when he discovers himself as a God of infinite wisdom, we may not only admire the traces and footsteps thereof, as they are visible in all his works, but desire that we may thereby be made wise unto salvation. When we conceive of him as a God of infinite power, we are to desire that he would enable us to have recourse to him, to work all that grace in us which can be effected by none but him with whom all things are possible. And, when he discovers himself as a God of infinite goodness and mercy, that we may be encouraged to hope that we shall be made partakers thereof, by his communicating to us the blessings that accompany salvation. And when he reveals himself as a God of infinite holiness, that we may be conformed to him, in some measure, so as to be enabled to hate and fly from every thing which is contrary thereunto; and that all sin, which contains in it a reflection on the purity of his nature, as well as a contempt of his authority, may be abhorred and detested by us. And when he discovers himself as a God of infinite faithfulness, a God that keepeth covenant and mercy, to them that fear him, who has made many promises respecting their salvation, and will certainly accomplish them, that we may depend upon, and put our trust in him; that he would remember his good word unto us, upon which he hath caused us to hope. When he makes himself known as our Creator, he the Potter, and we the clay, that we may be well pleased with all the dispensations of his providence towards us, as considering that he has a right to do what he will with his own. And when he reveals himself as our Redeemer, we are to pray, that we may be able to conclude, that we are bought with that invaluable price, which Christ gave for his elect: And if we have a comfortable hope concerning our interest therein, that we may walk as becomes those who are hereby laid under the highest obligations to love him, and live to him.

2. That we may worship him in a right manner, in all his ordinances: Accordingly, when he encourages us to attend to what he imparts therein, as in hearing, or reading the word, we pray, that we may be enabled to receive the truth in the love thereof, and improve it as that which is not *the word of men, but of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe,*



1 Thess. ii. 13. that we may esteem it as the only infallible rule of faith and duty; that we may be enabled to *hide it in our hearts, that we may not sin against him*, Psal. cxix. 11. And when we should draw nigh to him in prayer, in which he requires, that we should sanctify his name as a God all-sufficient, on whom we depend for the supply of our wants; or when we bless and praise him for what we have received, that the frame of our spirits may be suited to the spirituality and importance of the duty we are engaged in, that we may not be like those whom our Saviour speaks of, who *draw nigh to him with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, while their heart is far from him*, Matt. xv. 8.

3. As God makes himself known to us by his works, we are to beg of him, that in the work of creation, we may see and admire his eternal power and Godhead, and in his works of common providence, as upholding and governing all things, we may take occasion to adore the manifold wisdom of God, his almighty power, and the inexhaustible treasure of his goodness which appears therein: But more especially when he discovers himself in the gracious dispensations of his providence, in those things which have an immediate reference to our salvation, we are to beg of him, not only that he would enable us to look on them with admiration; but, particularly, to express our love and thankfulness to Christ our great Mediator and Advocate, as those who humbly trust and hope that we have an interest in him by faith. Thus concerning our requesting these things for ourselves,

We might here observe something concerning our doing it for others, for whom we are to pray, that they may have the highest esteem for God in all those respects and consequently that his name may be known throughout the whole world, not barely as the God of nature, but as he has revealed himself in his word; and therefore we are to pray, that the way of salvation, by Christ, may be known, and his name adored and magnified as a Redeemer and Saviour in those parts of the world, which are, at present, destitute of gospel-light; and that, where the word is preached, it may be received with faith and love, that they who are called Christians may walk more becoming that relation which they stand in to the blessed Jesus. Thus concerning the subject-matter of our requests in this petition, respecting God's enabling us and others, to glorify him in every thing by which he makes himself known.

There are two things inferred from hence in the close of this answer.

(1.) That when we pray, that God would sanctify his name, it is, in effect, to desire that he would prevent and remove every thing which is dishonourable to it. Some things tend to cast

so great a reproach on the name of God, that sinners are hereby hardened in their opposition to him; as David, by his sin, is said to have *given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, 2 Sam. xii. 14. And God is highly dishonoured by those open and scandalous sins which are committed by such as make a profession of religion; whereby it appears that they are strangers to the power thereof, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of those who are too ready to take an estimate of the ways of God, from the conversation of them, who in words profess, but in works deny him. Some deny the very being, perfections and providence of God, or being ignorant of him, worship they know not what; and there are others who treat things sacred with profaneness and scurrility; and, instead of sanctifying the name of God, openly blaspheme and cast a contempt on all his sacred institutions. Therefore,

[1.] We are to pray, that God would prevent and remove atheism. When persons not only act as though there were no God, but, with blasphemy, and daring insolence, express this in words: These are generally hardened in their iniquities, and bid defiance to his justice; as though they were, as it is said of the Leviathan, *made without fear*, Job xii. 33. and were not apprehensive of any ill consequences that will ensue hereupon. These are not to be convinced by arguments, though there is nothing that occurs in the works of creation and providence, but what might confute and put them to silence, did they duly attend to it: Therefore we are to pray, that God would assert his divine being and perfections, and give them some convincing proof thereof, by impressing the dread and terror of his wrath upon their consciences, that hereby they may learn not to blaspheme; or that he would give them that internal light, by which they may be brought to adore and sanctify his name. And whereas there are multitudes of practical atheists, who behave themselves as though there were no God to observe what they do, or punish them for it, therefore they presumptuously conclude, that they may rebel without being called to an account; we are to pray, that God, by his grace, would prevent and fence against prevailing impiety, by working a thorough reformation in the hearts of men, to the end that practical godliness may be promoted, and thereby he may be glorified.

[2.] We are to pray, that God would prevent and remove that ignorance which is inconsistent with persons sanctifying his name. This respects, more especially the not knowing or enquiring into those great doctrines, which are of the highest importance, and more directly tend to the advancing the glory of God, and the obtaining eternal life. In these who are destitute of divine revelation, this ignorance is invincible; there-

fore, with respect to such, we are to pray, that God would grant to them the means of grace, by sending his gospel among them; that they who sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, may have a glorious light shining about them, whereby they may be made acquainted with the way of salvation by Jesus Christ: But there are others who sit under the sound of the gospel, and yet remain strangers to the great doctrines thereof, who have no love to the truth, and act as though it did not belong to them, to study the scriptures; these are wilfully ignorant, like those who are said to *hate knowledge, and not to choose the fear of the Lord*, Prov. i. 29. We are to pray, with regard to such, that in order to their sanctifying the name of God, they may be led into the knowledge of those great doctrines, in which the glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is set forth, as it is in the work of redemption by Christ, together with the way in which righteousness and life may be attained; and that they may know what are those graces which are inseparably connected with, and necessary to salvation.

[3.] We are to pray, that God would prevent or remove idolatry; and that either such as is more gross and practised by the Heathen and others, who give that worship to creatures, that is due to God alone; or else, that idolatry which may be observed in the hearts and lives of many, who though they abhor the grosser acts thereof, are, nevertheless, guilty of this sin, in that they love the creature more than God. This is what we all are either chargeable with, or in danger of, which is directly contrary to our sanctifying the name of God: Therefore we are to pray, with respect to the former, that he would convince them what they falsely call worship, is a dishonour to, and abhorred by him; and, with respect to the latter, that he deserves our supreme love, and will not admit of any thing to stand in competition with him; and that he would enable us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength: And, in order hereunto, that he would deliver us from the iniquity of covetousness, or those inordinate affections, whereby we are inclined immoderately to pursue after the world, which is inconsistent with an heavenly conversation; and that we may be kept from self-seeking, or trusting to our own righteousness for justification, or giving that glory to any other which is due to God alone.

[4.] We are also to pray for the preventing and removal of that profaneness which is contrary to the sanctifying the name of God; that persons may not give themselves that liberty, which many do, to treat things sacred in a common way, or make religion the subject of wit and drollery; which is very disgusting to the ears of those who have an awe of God on

their spirits, and altogether unbecoming persons professing godliness. We are also to beg, that God would deliver us from engaging in religious duties in a formal way, as though his name were to be sanctified only by an external shew or appearance of religion, without that internal frame or disposition of heart which is required in all those who draw nigh to him in an holy manner; and also that we may be kept from making any innovation in the worship of God, and thereby profane it, while we pretend to add to the beauty thereof, and its acceptableness in his sight; which is so far from hallowing his name, that it is highly provoking to him.

(2.) Another thing inferred from the account we have had of those methods by which the name of God is said to be sanctified, is, that we are to beg of him, that, by his overruling providence, he would direct and dispose of all things to his own glory. This is his immediate work; without which his name would not be sanctified by his creatures. And it consists in his bringing a revenue of glory to himself, out of those things that seem to be subversive of it. It is one of the glories of providence, that hereby God brings good out of evil, and renders some things subservient to his interest, which, in themselves, have a tendency to overthrow it.

This may be observed in several things consequent upon the sins and persecutions of the church. Thus when Israel revolted from God, by making the golden calf in the wilderness, he first humbled them greatly for it, and then spirited them with zeal to execute judgment on those who did not repent of it; and afterwards, when, at Moses's intreaty, he forgave this sin, he filled them with a zeal for the establishing his worship equal to that which had been expressed before in profaning his name; so that, as they then parted with their golden earrings, to make the idol which they worshipped, *Exod. xxxii. 2, 3.* now they make a very large contribution for the building of the tabernacle, *chap. xxxv. 21—29. and xxxvi. 5, 6.* And when, by their abominable idolatry, they had provoked God to give them into the hands of those that carried them captive into Babylon: This was so far over-ruled by his providence, as that they were never guilty of idolatry afterwards, whatever temptations they had to it therein; so that when they were returned from captivity, how much soever they were chargeable with want of zeal for the building the temple, and setting up public worship in it, *Hag. i. 9.* or, for many other crimes, in that the priests sought their secular interest rather than the glory of God, in performing several branches of their office in a profane manner, and thereby rendering the public worship contemptible, and offering the *refuse of the flock* in sacrifice to God, for which they were reprov'd by him,

Mal. i. 10. & seq. yet we never find them reprov'd for idolatry after their captivity. This some think to be the meaning of that vision which the prophet Zechariah had of the woman who was called *wickedness, sitting in the midst of Ephah*; and this being *born by two women that had wings like the wings of a stork into the land of Shinar, viz. Chaldea, to build an house for it, Zech. v. 7,—11.* so that it might there be *established, and set upon her own base*, intimating that the idolatry of the Heathen should not spread itself among the Israelites as it had done, but be confined to those parts of the world which had set it up before; and therefore this is considered as what was the proper seat thereof, and not the church. And this seems also to be foretold by the prophet Hosea, when he says, that *the children of Israel, after they had been many days without a king, without a priest, and without a sacrifice*; adds, that *they should be without an image, Hos. iii. 4.* The former was an affliction, and denotes, that they should have their civil and religious state broken and discontinued; the latter seems to intimate, that providence would so far over-rule this, that they should be disinclined and averse to idolatry, as they are at this day, though, in other respects, altogether alienated from God.

And all the persecutions which the church has met with from its enemies, with a design to bring about its ruin and destruction, have been over-ruled for the furtherance of the gospel. Thus when Saul, before his conversion, *made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison*; so that a *great persecution* was raised against it by his instigation; and the people of God could not meet safely at Jerusalem, but were *scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, Acts viii. 1,—5.* this was ordered, by the providence of God, for the greater spread of the gospel, so that the Samaritans received the word of God. And in following ages, we may observe, that whatever attempts have been made against the interest of Christ in the world, they have, contrary to the design of his enemies, been made subservient to the promoting its greater advancement, as some have observed, that the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church; and herein the Psalmist's prediction has been fulfilled, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain, Psal. lxxvi. 10.* and oftentimes, when the gospel has, like the sea, lost ground in one part of the world, it has gained it in another.

Moreover, we may observe, that God glorifies his holiness by over-ruling the falls and miscarriages of particular believers, as hereby they are made more humble, watchful, and circumspect for the future; and, when restored from their backslidings, put upon admiring his grace, and excited to thankfulness,

which the nature of the thing requires. They also take occasion from hence, to warn others, lest they be entangled in the same snare, out of which they have escaped ; or, if fallen, to recommend to them those methods of divine grace where they have been recovered. This improvement the Psalmist made of the dealings of God with him, when he speaks of his being *brought out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay ; his feet set upon a rock, and his goings established ;* he adds, *many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord,* Psal. xl. 2, 3. And when God's people have been greatly dejected under the troubles they have met with ; he has over-ruled this for the restoring comforts to them, and then enabling them to comfort others, in like afflictions, which, as the apostle expresses it, *redounds to their consolation and salvation,* 2 Cor. i. 6. Thus concerning the first petition of the Lord's prayer, as it is explained in the answer before us.

We shall now consider how it may be reduced into practice, that we may be directed in our addressing ourselves to God in those things that concern the glory of his name. Accordingly, it is as though we should say, “ We adore thee, O our  
 “ God, that thou hast been pleased to make such discoveries  
 “ of thyself to thy people, as thou hast done in all ages ; and  
 “ in particular, we give thanks at the remembrance of thine  
 “ holiness : Thou mightest, indeed, have glorified thy name in  
 “ the everlasting destruction of the whole race of fallen man ;  
 “ but thou hast sanctified thy name, and advanced thy perfec-  
 “ tions in bringing about the work of our redemption by a  
 “ Mediator, in which justice and mercy are met together,  
 “ righteousness and peace have embraced each other ; and  
 “ thou hast hereby a greater revenue of glory redounding to  
 “ thy name, than by all thine other works, or than could have  
 “ been brought to thee by the united services of the most ex-  
 “ cellent creatures. We also bless thee that thou hast been  
 “ pleased to make those bright discoveries of thyself in thy  
 “ word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name ; that  
 “ thou hast given us thy gospel, and all the ordinances and  
 “ means of grace, that hereby thou mayest gather to thyself a  
 “ people out of the world, who might be holy in all conversa-  
 “ tion, as thou who hast called them art holy. We confess,  
 “ that we have not sanctified thy name as we ought, nor at-  
 “ tended on thine ordinances with that reverence and holy fear  
 “ that is due to thy divine Majesty, for which thou hast testi-  
 “ fied thy displeasure against us, in withdrawing thy presence  
 “ from thine own institutions. We acknowledge that herein  
 “ thou art righteous, and hast punished us less than our ini-  
 “ quities have deserved ; for thou mightest have removed thy  
 “ candlestick out of its place, or taken thine ordinances from



“ us, as thou hast done from many, who once worshipped thee,  
 “ as we do at this day, but are now wholly estranged from thee.  
 “ Revive thy work, O Lord, we beseech thee, and hereby sanc-  
 “ tify thy great name : Let thy word have free course, and be  
 “ glorified : Set up thy standard against every thing that op-  
 “ poses thine interest in the world ; send forth thy light and  
 “ thy truth, whereby the ignorant may be instructed in the  
 “ way of salvation by Christ. Give a check to that atheism,  
 “ profaneness, and irreligion that abounds among a professing  
 “ people ; and let all the dispensations of thy providence have  
 “ a tendency to bring about the work of reformation, that there-  
 “ by thou mayest be glorified, and thy people enabled, more  
 “ and more, to sanctify thee in every thing, whereby thou ma-  
 “kest thyself known.”

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**QUEST. CXCI.** *What do we pray for in the second petition ?*

**ANSW.** In the second petition, [which is, *Thy kingdom come,*] acknowledging ourselves, and all mankind to be, by nature, under the dominion of sin and Satan ; we pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in, the church furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate, that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted ; that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever ; and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends.

**I**N this petition there are,

**I.** Some things supposed, relating to the sovereignty and dominion of God over men, and the position that it meets with, which, how great soever it be, shall not hinder its advancement in the world.

**II.** There are several things which we are directed to pray for, relating thereunto.

**I.** As to those things that are supposed, we may consider,

**1.** That God is a great and glorious King. This is the necessary result of his being the Creator of all things ; from whence arises an universal propriety in them, and a right to dispose of them at his pleasure, in the methods of his provi-

dence, so that he can no more lose his right to govern the world, than he can cease to be God. It may be farther observed, that the subjects governed are intelligent creatures ; for, though all other things are upheld by him, and made use of to fulfil his pleasure ; yet they cannot be said to be under a law, or the subjects of moral government. Therefore God is more especially related to angels and men as their King ; and as to that branch of his government, which is exercised in this lower world, it principally respects men. Now when God is said to be their King, the exercise of his dominion is variously considered, according to the different circumstances in which they are.

(1.) As men, they are the subjects of his providential kingdom ; in which respect they are not only the objects of his care and common goodness, which extends itself, as the Psalmist says, to *all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 9. or, as he *gives to all, life and breath, and all things*, Acts xvii. 25. But, whatever he does in the world, is, some way or other, designed for their use or advantage, either as subservient to their happiness, or as objects, in which they behold the glory of his divine perfections that shines forth therein ; and, in this respect, as the God of nature, he is King over the whole world, whose glory infinitely surpasses that of the greatest monarch on earth. When men are said to have dominion, they derive it from his will and providence : It is also limited ; whereas his is universal. And they are accountable to him for the administration of that authority, which he commits to them : But he giveth no account of his matters to any one ; inasmuch as there is none superior to him. Moreover, there are many flaws and imperfections in the government of the best kings on earth ; because their wisdom, holiness, power, and justice are imperfect ; and sometimes the most desirable ends are not attained thereby : But, on the other hand, the divine government is such as tends to set forth God's glorious perfections, and answer the highest ends, to wit, the advancement of his own name, in promoting the welfare of his creatures. We may also observe, that the greatest potentates on earth, are not only mortal, but their government is often subject to change, and liable to be resisted and controuled, by other kings like themselves : Whereas God has none equal with him ; therefore his government cannot be controuled ; and being all-sufficient, he cannot be destitute of what is necessary to fulfil his purpose, or advance his glory. Again, none but God has a right to give laws to the consciences of men ; and, indeed, no government is properly spiritual, and such as reaches the heart like his ; nor does the honour that is due to any other, contain in it, the least right to divine worship or adoration which belongs only to him.

(2.) As God has a peculiar people in the world, who are the objects of his grace, these are the subjects of Christ's mediatorial kingdom, in which respect he is styled King of saints. This is not only a divine honour which we ascribe to him; but it belongs to him in particular as our Redeemer: and so it is to be understood whenever he is called a King in scripture, as denoting that kingdom which he has received from his Father; whereas his right to govern the world, which is styled his providential kingdom, necessarily belongs to him as God, and is no more conferred upon him by the will of his Father, than his divine nature or personality: We do not therefore pray in this petition, that he would govern the world; for we may all well address ourselves to him, that he would be an infinite Sovereign, and act agreeably to his divine nature, which he cannot but be and do. But the kingdom which is here intended, which we have a more immediate regard to, as the subject-matter of this petition, is, that which belongs to him as Mediator, which he received from the Father; who is said, in this respect, to have *set him as his King upon his holy hill of Zion*, Psal. ii. 6, concerning whom it was foretold, that *the government should be upon his shoulder*, Isa. ix. 6. This is therefore not only an honour, but an office which he is invested with, having received a commission from the Father, to execute it; and whenever he is said to do any thing in the methods of his providence, which have an immediate reference to the salvation of his people, it contains in it the exercise of his dominion, or is a branch of the glory of his Mediatorial kingdom; and this is what we have a peculiar regard to, when we desire that his kingdom may come. In this respect we pray, that all the dispensations of his providence may tend to the application of that redemption which is purchased for his people; and in particular, that he would subdue them to himself, take possession of their hearts, govern them by his laws, defend them by his power, restrain and conquer all their enemies, and, at last, admit them to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

In the New Testament Christ's kingdom is generally taken for the gospel-dispensation; in which he is represented as sitting on a throne of grace, and sinners are invited to come and bow down before him, and receive the blessings that he encourages them to expect, as their merciful Sovereign. This kingdom of grace shall not cease to be administered by him, till all his redeemed ones are made willing, in the day of his power, and, pursuant thereunto, brought into a better world; and then it will receive another denomination, as called, the kingdom of heaven. It is true, the gospel-dispensation is often so called in the New Testament, as it respects the adminis-

tion of his gracious government begun and carried on in this world ; whereas, in heaven, it will be administered in a most glorious manner, agreeably to that state of perfection to which his saints shall be brought ; But these things having been particularly insisted on under a foregoing answer, in which Christ's Kingly office was explained \* ; we shall pass them over at present, and proceed to consider another thing supposed in this petition, viz.

2. That though God be the only supreme and lawful Sovereign, yet there are some who pretend to stand in competition with, and usurp that dominion which belongs only to him. Accordingly man no sooner rebelled against him, but he was under the dominion of sin, and was inclined to serve divers lusts and pleasures, and willingly gave himself over as a vassal of Satan, who, from that time, was styled *the prince, or god of this world, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience*, John xii. 31. 2 Cor. iv. 4. Eph. ii. 2. We must not suppose that he has the least right to this kingdom, or dominion, in which he sets himself against the divine government ; yet sinners who rebel against God, are said to be Satan's subjects. Where the gospel is not preached, he reigns without controul ; and false churches, that oppose the faith contained therein, are called, *Synagogues of Satan*, Rev. ii. 9. and, indeed, in all those places, where Christ's kingdom of grace doth not extend itself, there persons are said to be subjects of Satan's kingdom ; which is opposed to it. These two kingdoms divide the world ; therefore, when we pray, that Christ's kingdom may be advanced, this includes in it an earnest desire, that whatsoever has a tendency to oppose it, may be ruined and destroyed. And this leads us to consider,

II. What we are to pray for in this petition. Here let it be observed, that we are not to pray, that God would govern the world, or exercise his providential kingdom, for that he cannot but do ; neither are we to pray that Christ's kingdom may come, in the same sense in which the church prayed for it, before the gospel-dispensation, which is called his kingdom, was erected ; since that would be, in effect, to deny that there is such a kingdom ; or, that our Saviour has a church, in which he exercises his government in the world : Nevertheless, we are to pray, that God would eminently display his perfections for the good of his people, in his providential government of the world, and over-rule all the dispensations thereof, for the advancement of his own name, and the happiness of his church and people ; and though (as we have but now observed) we are not to pray that the gospel-dispensation may be erected ;

\* See Vol. II. Quest. XLV. page 353.

yet we are to pray that Christ's spiritual kingdom may be further extended, subjects daily brought into it, and the blessed fruits and effects thereof, which tend to promote his own glory, and his people's happiness may be abundantly experienced by them : But, that we may more particularly explain the several things contained in this answer, which respect the subject-matter of our prayers, when we say, *Thy kingdom come*, we express our desire,

1. That the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed : This Christ will certainly do in his own time, inasmuch as it is directly opposite to his kingdom. The Devil's chief design is to draw Christ's subjects off from their allegiance to him : Therefore he will certainly plead his own cause, that his enemies may not take occasion to insult him, as though they had gained a victory over the Almighty. Moreover, his holiness and justice obliges him to do this ; for since Satan's kingdom is supported by sin's gaining strength, and this tends to cast a reproach on the divine perfections ; it must be destroyed. And to this we may add, that every one who is converted, is, (as the apostle says) *delivered from the power of darkness, and delivered into the kingdom of God's dear Son*, Col. i. 13. Therefore we pray, that Christ's interest may flourish in the world, which includes in it a desire, that whatsoever is contrary to it, may be thrown down.

There are various steps and degrees whereby Satan's kingdom has been, and shall be weakened, till it shall be, at last, wholly destroyed.

(1.) It met with a great shock when the first gospel promise was given to Adam in paradise, relating to the *seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. or Christ's coming to defeat this deep-laid design against the interest of God in the world, by giving him a total defeat to him that was at the head thereof. Till this promise was given, there could not be the least hope of salvation for fallen man ; whose condition was not only deplorable, but desperate, and, in all appearance, remediless ; but by this first display of divine grace, a door of hope was opened, and Satan's kingdom began to be broken and demolished.

(2.) It met with a farther shock, when men began to lay hold of, and take encouragement from this promise, and public worship was set up in the world ; and the coming of the Messiah, who was expected to appear in our nature, and in the fulness of time, to destroy the works of the Devil, was farther made known to the church, and clearer intimations given of the glory of his Person, and the offices he was to execute, by which means he was regarded as the object of their faith, who waited for, and earnestly desired the gospel-day, when all the

types and prophecies relating therunto, should have their accomplishment.

(3.) Satan's kingdom met with a very great defeat, when Christ, who was the desire of all nations, took our nature, and dwelt among us, and, in the whole course of his ministry, discovered the way of salvation to his people, more clearly than it had been in former ages, and finished the work of redemption in his death, whereby he paid an infinite price for his elect, to divine justice ; and at the same time, *destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the Devil*, Heb. ii. 14. or, as it is expressed elsewhere, *spoiled principalities, and powers, openly triumphing over them in his cross*, Col. ii. 15. And when he was raised from the dead, whereby the work that he came about was brought to perfection, Satan's kingdom was so effectually destroyed, that he shall not be able to maintain that dominion which he had over them, who before were his vassals, but are now become Christ's subjects by right of redemption.

(4.) The success of the gospel, in the various ages since our Saviour was here on earth ; his gathering and building up his church, defeating all the attempts of his enemies, who have threatened its ruin ; so that the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against it ; and its having been favoured with his special presence, and the means of grace bestowed upon, and continued to it, together with the various instances of that success that has attended them, have all had a tendency to weaken and destroy Satan's kingdom.

(5.) All the victories that believers are enabled to obtain over sin, and Satan's temptations ; and all the graces that they have exercised, and comforts that they have experienced, are a gradual weakening of Satan's kingdom, though the victory over him, at present, be not complete, inasmuch as he has too great an interest in the hearts of God's people, through the remainders of corruption ; yet they shall, at last, be made more than conquerors over him ; and the fruits and consequences of the victory that Christ has obtained over him, shall be perfectly applied.

2. In desiring that Christ's kingdom may come, we pray that the gospel may be propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, and the fulness of the Gentiles brought in. When the gospel-dispensation, which is Christ's kingdom was first erected ; the apostles, who were employed in this important work, were to fulfil that commission which he gave them, in preaching the gospel to all nations, which accordingly they did, and, by the extraordinary hand of God that attended it, it was spread, in a short space of time through a considerable part of the world ; many of the Jews were called, among whom all that were ordained to eternal life, believed ; and as



for the Gentiles, who, before this, were unacquainted with the way of salvation, they had Christ preached to them, and many churches were gathered from among them ; by which means his kingdom was advanced, and a foundation laid, for the propagation and flourishing state of the gospel in all succeeding ages, the effects whereof are experienced at this day. Therefore, when this petition relating to the coming of Christ's kingdom, was used by those who lived at this time, when our Saviour gave this direction about it ; that which was principally intended thereby, was, that Christ might be preached to the Gentiles, and believed on in the world ; that the veil, or the face of the covering that was spread over all nations, might be taken away, and the way of salvation might be known by them, who, before this, sat in the region and shadow of death : Though, when it is used by us, we signify our desire that this invaluable blessing may be still continued, and the promises relating to the greater success thereof, may have a more full accomplishment. The apostles, indeed, in executing their commission, are said to have preached the gospel to all nations, that is, to a very considerable part of the heathen world : However, it does not appear that every individual nation of the world has been yet favoured with this privilege ; and therefore, what was foretold concerning the *earth's being full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*, Isa. xi. 9. and other predictions to the like purpose, do not seem hitherto to have had their full accomplishment \*. And it is very evident, that many nations, who once had the gospel preached to them by the apostles, are now wholly destitute of it. And though it is true, a considerable number of the Jews at first, believed in Christ ; yet the greatest part of that nation were cast off, and all remain, at this day, strangers and enemies to him : Therefore we cannot but suppose, that those prophecies which respect their conversion, in the latter day, together with the fulness of the Gentiles being brought in, shall be more eminently accomplished than they have hitherto been †. This is therefore what we are to pray for when we say, *Thy kingdom come* ; and, in order thereto, we are to be importunate with God,

(1.) That his interest may be still maintained, and the glory may not depart from his church ; but that it may still enjoy the ordinances of his grace, and those privileges by which it is distinguished from the world, notwithstanding all the attempts of hell, and persecuting powers to undermine and overthrow it. And, though it be brought to a very low ebb at this day, that he would revive his work in the midst of the years, till he be

\* See Vol. II. page 376.

† See Vol. II. page 376, &c.

pleased to cause that glorious day to dawn, which his people are now desiring, waiting and hoping for; and in order hereunto, we are to pray,

(2.) That there may be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, which is absolutely necessary to the advancement of Christ's kingdom; a farther reformation of the church, and a greater spread of the gospel in those nations where it is not known at present.

(3.) We are to pray, that the church may be furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances that are necessary hereunto. Not that we are to pray, that new ordinances may be instituted, which, at present, are not known, which we have no warrant from scripture to expect; but that God, by the good hand of his providence, would send his ordinances, namely, the word, sacraments and prayer, which are his outward and ordinary means of salvation, into those parts of the world, which are, at present, strangers to them. Accordingly we are to pray,

[1.] That wherever God has a people who thirst after the word, but enjoy not the preaching thereof, especially with that zeal and clearness as is necessary to their spiritual advantage and edification in Christ, that he would send faithful labourers among them, that their souls may not pine, starve, and be in danger of perishing, for lack of knowledge.

[2.] That where the word of God has been preached with success, so that many believe in Christ, who, nevertheless, have not the advantage of walking together, for their mutual edification, in a church-relation, that God would over-rule and order matters so, that they who have given up themselves to the Lord, may encourage and strengthen the hands of one another, by joining together in religious societies, owning Christ's kingly government, and worshipping him in all those ordinances which he has given to his churches. And,

[3.] That there may be proper officers, spirited, qualified, and raised up, in subserviency thereunto; that there may be a constant supply of *pastors according to his heart, which shall feed with knowledge and understanding*, Jer. iii. 15. These are necessary to the well-being of a church; and though extraordinary gifts are not to be expected, in like manner as God was pleased to bestow them on his apostles in the first planting of the gospel; yet there are some gifts which Christ has purchased, and we are to pray for, that are particularly adapted to the furnishing them, who are called to minister as officers in his churches, for the promoting his cause and interest therein, and thereby advancing his spiritual kingdom.

(4.) We are to pray, that the church may be purged from those corruptions that tend to defile, and are a great reproach.

to it, and very unbecoming the relation that it stands in to Christ. It is not, indeed, to be supposed, that any church in the world, is so pure that there are no corruptions in it, which appear to the eye of the heart-searching God: But some are visible to the world, being notorious and inconsistent, not only with the purity, but, if allowed of, with the very being of a church of Christ; which are matter of lamentation to the godly, and a reproach to those who are chargeable therewith; and, as the apostle styles them, *a root of bitterness springing up and troubling them, whereby many are defiled*, Heb. xii. 15. These corruptions are either such as respect the faith, or conversation of professors.

[1.] As to what respects corruption in matters of faith. These consist in the denying the most important doctrines, which are necessary to be known and believed, in order to our salvation; and with respect hereunto, we are to pray, that Christians may not depart from the faith, which was once delivered to the saints, being *carried about with divers and strange doctrines*, chap. xiii. 9. or, as it is said elsewhere, *soon removed from him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel*, Gal. i. 6. We are also to pray, that he would root out those errors and heresies which are inconsistent with the church's purity; and have a greater tendency to bring about its ruin than all the persecutions it can meet with from its most enraged enemies.

[2.] There are other corruptions that more especially respect the conversation of those who are called Christians, that walk not as becomes the gospel of Christ, by which means there is no visible difference between the church and the world: Thus the apostle tells the church at Corinth, 1 Cor. iii. 3. that some of them were *carnal and walked as men*; that is, notwithstanding the profession of religion that they made, in their conversation they differed little from the men of the world: And he also speaks of others who *profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16. Now, with respect to these, we are to pray, that their profession may be adorned by a holy life; that none may cast a stumbling-block in the way of these who watch for their haltings, and are glad to take all opportunities to improve the falls and miscarriages of Christians against them; and that God, by his providence, or rather, by his Spirit, poured out from on high, would refine and purify his church, *purge away the dross, and take away all the tin*, as the prophet expresses it, Isa. i. 25.

(5.) We are farther to pray, that the ordinances of Christ may be purely administered, without any mixture of human inventions, which tend to debase, and are far from adding any

beauty or glory to them. It is natural, indeed, for man to be fond of, and pleased with, those ordinances, which take their rise from himself; but God, who is jealous for the purity of his own worship, can in no wise approve of them, and they are so far from advancing Christ's kingdom, that God reckons it no other than *setting our threshold by his thresholds, and our post by his, which he calls a defiling his holy name, by the abominations which they herein commit*, which will be the ground and reason of his *consuming them in his anger*, Ezek. xliii. 8. Therefore, we are to pray, that whatever intrudes itself into any branch of the worship of God, as not receiving any warrant or sanction from himself, may be removed out of the way, that hereby his church may be reformed, and its destruction prevented.

(6.) We are to pray, that the church may be encouraged by civil magistrates, that their government may be subservient to Christ's spiritual kingdom; that, according to God's promise, *kings may be its nursing fathers, and their queens its nursing mothers*, Isa. xlix. 23. that, by this means, it may have peace and safety, and not be exposed, as it has often been, to the rage and fury of persecuting powers; and also, that magistrates may be guardians, not only of the civil, but religious liberties of their subjects, which is necessary to complete the happiness of a nation, and bring down many blessings from God upon it. We are also to pray, that God would not only incline them to advance religion, by rendering the administration of civil government, subservient thereunto, but that, by a steady adherence to it themselves, they may strengthen the hands of the faithful, and encourage many others to embrace it: And if, on the other hand, they are disposed to exercise their power, in such a way, as tends to the discountenancing religion, and weakening the hands of those who profess it; we are to pray, that God would over-rule their counsels, and incline them to deal favourably with those who desire stedfastly to adhere to it.

(7.) We are taught, in this petition, to pray, that the means of grace may be made effectual to the converting of sinners, and to the confirming, comforting, and building up of believers; that a great and effectual door may be opened for the success of the gospel, and that it may *come not in word only, but also in power*, 1 Thess. i. 3. so that, by this means, the Lord would be pleased to add to the church daily, such as shall be saved, that hereby Christ's government, or spiritual kingdom, may be promoted in the hearts of his people, and they enabled to testify a ready and willing subjection to his authority, and yield obedience to him, with all the powers and faculties of their souls.

(8.) We are to pray for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, at his second and glorious coming; when the work of grace shall be brought to its utmost perfection; and all the elect, who shall have lived from the beginning to the end of time, shall be gathered together, and brought into Christ's kingdom of glory, as they have formerly been into his kingdom of grace, when the highest honours shall be conferred upon them, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever. As the church, under the Old Testament-dispensation, prayed that Christ's kingdom of grace might come, viz. be administered, as it has been, and now is, under the gospel-dispensation, and, as it is expressed, that he would *be like a roe, or like a young hart upon the mountains of Bether*, Cant. ii. 17. or, that the desire of all nations would fill his house with glory: So the New Testament-church is represented as praying, that Christ would *come quickly*, according to his promise, Rev. xxii. 20. and put a final period to every thing that has had a tendency to detract from the glory of his kingdom, or the happiness of his subjects; and, in order hereunto, we must pray, that the elect, who are Christ's mystical body, may be gathered, and brought in to him; and then we may be sure that he will hasten his coming. And, till this is done, we are to wait patiently, as the *husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth*, in the desired harvest, James v. 7. and, in the mean time, we are to pray, that he would be pleased to exert his power, and make the dispensations of his providence in the world, conducive to answer these ends, and more particularly, with respect to ourselves; that hereby we may have, not only an habitual, but an actual meetness for the heavenly kingdom; that when our Lord shall come, we may not be like those *virgins* mentioned in the parable, who *all slumbered and slept*, Matt. xxv. 5. but, upon the first alarm, may go out to meet him with joy and triumph; and, as an evidence hereof, that we may be enabled to walk as *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*, or, as those who *desire a better country, that is, an heavenly*, Heb. xi. 13, 16. and that we may keep up an intercourse with Christ, that we may be ready to entertain him with delight and pleasure, whenever he comes; that when he, who is our Life, our Hope, and Saviour, as well as our King, shall appear, we may appear with him in glory. Thus concerning the administration of Christ's Kingly government, as the subject-matter of this petition: And, that we may be farther assisted in directing our prayers to God agreeable thereunto, we may consider his children as addressing themselves to him to this purpose: "We adore and magnify thee, O God our Saviour, as the Governor of the world; who dost according to

“ thy will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants  
“ of the earth. Thy power is irresistible, and thy works won-  
“ derful : But it is matter of the highest astonishment, that  
“ thou should exercise that gracious government, in which  
“ thou condescendest to be called the King of saints. What  
“ is man, that thou shouldst thus magnify him, and set thine  
“ heart upon him ; that they, whom thou mightest have dealt  
“ with as traitors, and enemies to thy government, and, as  
“ such, have ruled them with a rod of iron, and broken them  
“ in pieces, like a potter’s vessel, should be admitted to par-  
“ take of the privileges which thou art pleased to bestow on  
“ thy servants and subjects ! Thou hast often invited us, by  
“ holding forth thy sceptre of grace, to come and acknowledge  
“ thee to be our Lord and Sovereign ; but our hearts have  
“ been filled with rebellion against thee. We have served  
“ divers lusts and pleasures, and been in confederacy with  
“ hell and death, yielding ourselves slaves to Satan, thine  
“ avowed enemy : But now, we desire to cast ourselves down  
“ before thy foot-stool ; and, while we stand amazed at thy  
“ clemency, we accept of the overture of a pardon which  
“ thou hast made in the gospel, with the greatest thankful-  
“ ness, accounting it our highest privilege, as well as our in-  
“ dispensable duty, to be thy subjects. Write thy law, we  
“ beseech thee, in our hearts ; bring down every high thought  
“ and imagination, which sets itself against thine interest, and  
“ make us entirely willing to be thy servants, devoted to thy  
“ fear. We also beg, that thou wouldst take to thyself thy  
“ great power and reign. Let Satan’s kingdom be destroyed,  
“ thy gospel propagated throughout the world. May thine  
“ ancient people, the Jews, who now refuse that thou shouldst  
“ reign over them, be called and inclined to own thee as their  
“ King ; and may the dark parts of the earth see thy salvation.  
“ Reform thy churches ; let them be constantly supplied with  
“ those who shall go in and out before them, and shall feed  
“ them with knowledge and understanding. May they be  
“ purged from those corruptions which are a reproach to thy  
“ government ; let not the commandments of men be received,  
“ instead of thine holy institutions ; may thine ordinances be  
“ purely dispensed, that thy people may have ground to hope  
“ for thy presence therein ; and may they be made effectual for  
“ the converting of sinners, and establishing thy saints in their  
“ holy faith. And let all the dispensations of thy providence  
“ in the world, have a tendency to advance thy kingdom of  
“ grace, that, as thou hast, in all ages, appeared in the behalf of  
“ thy church and people ; so it may be preserved and carried  
“ through all the difficulties that it meets with, and be secured



“ from the attempts of thine enemies against it, till they who  
 “ rejoice in thy government here, shall be received into thy  
 “ heavenly kingdom hereafter.”

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**QUEST. CXCII.** *What do we pray for in the third petition ?*

**ANSW.** In the third petition, [which is, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*] acknowledging that, by nature, we, and all men, are not only utterly unable and unwilling to know and do the will of God, but prone to rebel against his word, to repine and murmur against his providence, and wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh, and of the Devil : We pray, that God would by his Spirit, take away from ourselves and others, all blindness, weakness, indisposedness, and perverseness of heart, and by his grace make us able and willing to know, do, and submit to his will in all things, with the like humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy, as the angels do in heaven.

**F**OR the understanding of this petition, we must enquire,  
 I. What is meant by the will of God, and how it is said to be done by us. We have, under a foregoing answer, considered \*, that this is distinguished into his secret and revealed will, and shewn that as the former of these is the reason of his own actings, and determines the event of things ; the latter is what we are more especially concerned about, as it is a rule of duty to us. It is also farther distinguished into his perceptive and providential will ; the former of which we are to obey ; the latter, to admire, submit to, and be well pleased with : Accordingly, when we pray, *Thy will be done*, we desire, that his laws might be obeyed, and thereby his universal dominion, and right to govern the world, practically acknowledged ; and that, by this means, sin might be prevented, and this earth might not become so much like hell as it would be, in this method, which God has taken to direct our actions, and give a check to our corruptions, were wholly disregarded by us. When we consider God as the Creator of man, the next idea we have of him is, that he exercises his dominion and sovereignty in giving laws to him ; which he is under a natural obligation to obey ; otherwise he disowns himself to be a creature, or a subject, which is the highest affront that can be offered to the divine Majesty, and exposes him to that punishment which is due to those who are found in open rebellion against him : This is

\* See Vol. I. Quest. xii. p. 471.

what we are to pray against in this petition, in which there is something supposed, namely, (a)

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(a) It has been said, that there cannot be any reason or motive to pray, or make any petition, to an *unchangeable God*, whose design cannot be altered, and who has fixed all events, without a possibility of any change.

Before any attempt is made to remove this objection, and supposed difficulty, it must be observed, that it equally lies against the *foreknowledge of God*. For if God certainly foreknows every thing that will take place, then every event is fixed and certain, otherwise it could not be foreknown. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." He has determined, and passed an unchangeable decree, with respect to all that he will do to eternity. Upon the plan of the objection under consideration, it may be asked, What reason or motive can any one have to ask God to do any thing for him, or any one else, since he infallibly knows from the beginning what he will do, and therefore it is unalterably fixed? Therefore if it be reasonable to pray to an *omniscient God*, it is equally reasonable to pray to an *unchangeable God*. For the former necessarily implies the latter. But in order to show that the objection is without foundation, the following things must be observed.

1. If God were not omniscient and unchangeable, and had not foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, he would not be the proper object of worship, and there would be no foundation, reason, or encouragement to make any petition to him.

This, it is presumed, will be evident to any one who will well consider the following observations.

*First.* If there were no unchangeable, omniscient Being, there would be no God, no proper object of worship. A being who is capable of change, is necessarily imperfect, and may change from bad to worse, and even cease to exist, and therefore could not be trusted. If we could know that such a being has existed, and that he was once wise, and good, and powerful, we could have no evidence that he would continue to be wise or good, or that he is so now, or that he is now disposed to pay any regard to our petitions, or is either willing or able to grant them; or even that he has any existence. What reason of encouragement then can there be to pray to a changeable being? Surely none at all. Therefore, if there be no reason to pray to an *unchangeable God*, there can be no reason to pray at all.

*Secondly.* If God be infinitely wise, and good, and omnipotent, supreme and independent; then he certainly is unchangeable, and has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. This has been proved above, or rather is self-evident. But if he be not infinitely wise and good, &c. then he cannot be trusted; he cannot be the object of that trust and confidence which is implied, and even expressed, in praying to him.

*Thirdly.* The truly pious, benevolent, devout man would not desire, or even dare, to pray to God for any thing, if he were changeable, and disposed to alter his purpose and plan, in order to grant his petitions. Therefore he never does pray to any but an *unchangeable God*, whose counsel stands forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations. He is sensible that he is a very imperfect creature; that his heart, his will, is awfully depraved and sinful; that he knows not what is wisest and best to be done in any one instance; what is best for him, for mankind in general, for the world, or for the universe; what is most for the glory of God, and the greatest general good; and that it would be infinitely undesirable and dreadful to have his own will regarded so as to govern in determining what shall be done for him or any other being, or what shall take place. If it could be left to him to determine in the least instance, he would not dare to do it, but would refer it back to God, and say, "Not my will, but *thine* be done." But he could not do this, unless he were certain that the will of God was unchangeably wise and good, and that he had decreed to do what was most for his own glory, and the greatest good of the whole; at the

1. That his will must be known by us, otherwise it cannot be obeyed. And this supposes the law to be promulgated ;

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same time infallibly knowing what must take place, in every instance, in order to answer this end ; and consequently must have fixed upon the most wise and best plan, foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass. Therefore, whatever be his petitions for himself, or for others, he offers them to God, and asks, *on this condition*, always either expressed or implied, *If it be agreeable to thy will* : for, otherwise he would not have his petitions granted, if it were possible. And he who asks any thing of God, without making this condition, but sets up his own will, and desires to have it gratified, whether it be for the glory of God, and the greatest good of his kingdom, or not ; and would, were it in his power, compel his Maker to grant his petition, and bow the will of God to his own will ; he who prays to God with such a disposition, is an impious enemy to God ; exercises no true devotion, and cannot be heard ; and it is desireable to all the friends of God that he should be rejected. Resignation to the will of God always supposes his will is unchangeably fixed and established, which it could not be, unless he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Thus it appears that if God were changeable, and had not foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, there would be no foundation for religious worship, or reason for praying to him ; or that there can be no reason or encouragement for prayer and petition to any but an *unchangeable* God.—I proceed to observe,

2. There is good reason, and all desirable and possible encouragement, to pray to an unchangeable God, who has from eternity determined what he will do, in every instance, and has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

This will doubtless be evident, to him who will duly, consider the following particulars.

*First.* Prayer is as proper, important, and necessary, in order to obtain favour from an unchangeable God, as it could be were he changeable, and had not foreordained any thing.

Means are as necessary in order to obtain the end, as if nothing were fixed and certain. Though it was decreed that Paul and all the men in the ship should get safe to land, when they were in a storm at sea ; yet this must be accomplished by means, and unless the sailors had assisted in managing the ship, this event could not take place, and they could not be saved. Prayer is a means of obtaining what God had determined to grant ; for he has determined to give it in answer to prayer, and no other way. “ Ask, and ye shall receive,” says our Saviour. When God had promised to do many and great things for Israel, he adds, “ Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them :” [*Ezek. xxxvi. 37.*] The granting the favours, which God had determined to bestow, was as much suspended on their asking for them, as if there had been nothing determined and fixed about it. There is as much regard had to prayer in granting favours, and the prayer is heard, and God gives them, as really and as much in answer to it, as if there were nothing determined and foreordained respecting them : for the decree includes and fixes the means, as much as the end ; the method and way by which events are to take place, as much as those events themselves. The one depends on the other, as much as if there were no decree, and nothing fixed ; yea, much more : for the decree *fixes* the dependence and connexion between the means and the end : whereas if there were no decree, and nothing fixed, there would be no established connexion, but all would be uncertain, and there would be no reason or encouragement to use means, or do any thing to obtain an end.

Surely, then, there is as much reason and encouragement to pray to an unchangeable God, and this is as important and necessary, as if there were nothing fixed by the divine decrees, and much more : yea, the unchangeable purposes of God are the necessary and only proper ground and reason of prayer.

*Secondly.* Though prayer is not designed to make any change in God, or alter his purpose, which is impossible ; yet it is suited and designed to have an effect

which has been already done; particularly as it was written by God on the heart of man at first, in such legible characters,

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on the petitioner, and prepare him to receive that for which he prays. And this is a good reason why he should pray. It tends to make the petitioner to feel more and more sensibly his wants, and those of others for whom he prays, and the miserable state in which he and they are: for in prayer these are called up to view, and dwelt upon: and prayer tends to give a sense of the worth and importance of the favours asked. It is also suited to make persons feel, more and more, their own helplessness, and entire dependence on God for the favours for which they petition, of which their praying is an acknowledgment: and therefore tends to enhance them in the eyes of the petitioner, when given in answer to prayer, and make him more sensible of the free, sovereign goodness of God in granting them.\* In sum, this is suited to keep the existence and character of God in view, and impress a sense of religious truths in general on the mind, and to form the mind to universal obedience, and a conscientious watchfulness and circumspection, in all religious exercises.

*Thirdly.* It is reasonable, and highly proper and important, and for the honour of God, that the friends of God should express and acknowledge their entire dependence on him, and trust in him, for all they want for themselves and others, and their belief in the power, wisdom and goodness of God; and all this is acknowledged, expressly or implicitly, in prayer to God. It is also reasonable and proper that they should express their desire of those things which are needed by themselves or others, and which God alone can give or accomplish: and such desires are expressed in the best way and manner by petitioning for them. And in asking for blessings on others, and praying for their enemies, they express their benevolence, which is an advantage to themselves, and pleasing to God, even though their petitions should have no influence in procuring the favours which they ask. And in praying that God would honour himself, and advance his own kingdom, and accomplish all the great and glorious things which he has promised to do for his own honour, and the good of his people, they do not express any doubts of his fulfilling his promises, but are certain he will grant their petitions; but they hereby express their acquiescence in these things, and their earnest desire that they may be accomplished; and also profess and express their love to God, and friendship to his people and kingdom; and do that which the feelings of a pious, benevolent heart will naturally, and even necessarily, prompt them to do.

We have many examples of such petitions and prayers for those things and events, which the petitioners, antecedent to their prayers, knew would certainly be accomplished. We have a decisive and remarkable instance of this in David, the king of Israel, in the following words: "And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, *and do as thou hast said.* And let thy name be magnified forever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, *I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer before thee.* And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised

\* A kind and wise father, who designs to give his child some particular favour, will bring the child to ask for it before he bestows it, and will suspend the gift upon this condition, for the benefit of the child, that what he grants may be a real advantage to him, and a greater than if it were given before the child was better prepared to receive it, by earnestly and humbly asking for it; and that the father may hereby receive a proper acknowledgment from the child, and be treated in a becoming manner. And in this case, the petition of the child is as really regarded, heard and granted, and the child's application and prayer to the father is as much a means of obtaining the favour, and as proper, important, and necessary, as if the father had not previously determined the whole affair. And when the children of such a father know that this is his way of bestowing favours on them, they will have as proper motives, and as much encouragement, to ask for all they want, as if he had not determined what he would do antecedent to their asking him; yea, much more.

that our apostacy from him has not wholly erased it. But besides this, there must be an internal impression made on the

this goodness unto thy servant. Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue forever before thee; for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it, and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed forever:" [2 Sam. vii. 25—29.] Here David not only prays God to do that which at the same time he knew and acknowledges God had promised to do; and therefore it was established as firm as the throne of the Almighty, and decreed that it should take place; but he says that this promise of God, making it certain, was the reason, motive, and encouragement to him to make this prayer: "Thou, O Lord, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house. And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, *and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant*; THEREFORE HATH THY SERVANT FOUND IN HIS HEART TO PRAY THIS PRAYER BEFORE THEE." We hence are warranted to assert that it is reasonable and proper to pray for that which God has promised; and that the certainty that it will be accomplished is a motive and encouragement to pray for it. How greatly then do they err, who think that if every event is made certain by God's decree, there is no reason of encouragement to pray for any thing!

Our Saviour, in the pattern of prayer which he has dictated, directs men to pray that God would bring to pass those events which are already fixed and decreed, and therefore must infallibly take place; "Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done,*" &c.

Christ himself, in the 17th chapter of John, prays for those whom the Father had given to him, that he would keep them through his own name, and that they might be *one*, as the Father and Son were one; might be kept from the evil in the world, and be sanctified through the truth; that they might be with him in heaven forever, and behold his glory. At the same time he knew that all this was made certain to them; for he had before said, that all that were given to him should come to him, and he would raise them up at the last day; that he would give unto them eternal life, and not one of them should perish, as none should be able to pluck them out of his hands, or his Father's. He prays, "Father, glorify thy name;" not because this event was uncertain, but to express his earnest desire of that which he knew was decreed, and could not but take place, and his willingness to give up every thing, even his own life to promote this. Again, Christ prays in the following words: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." The event for which Christ prays in these words was decreed from eternity, and the decree had been long before published, in the 2d and 110th Psalms: "I will declare the decree: The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." And he had declared the certainty of that for which he here prays, since his incarnation. He had said, that all power in heaven and earth was given unto him; that "the Father had committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. St. Paul, when speaking of God, often introduces the following words: "To whom be glory forever, Amen;" which is not to be considered as a mere doxology, by which glory is *ascribed* to God; but it is rather a *wish*, or *desire*, that God may be glorified forever; and the *Amen* corroborates it: as if he had said, "Let it be so; this is the most ardent desire of my soul, including the sum of all my petitions." Here then the Apostle utters a desire and petition for that which he knew was decreed, and would take place.

The last words of Christ to his church are, "Surely I come quickly." Upon which promise the following petition of the church, and of every friend of his, is presented to him: "Amen, even so come Lord Jesus." Here is a petition, in

minds and consciences of men, whereby they may be brought to see the excellency and glory thereof, and their indispensable obligation to yield obedience thereunto.

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which all Christians join, praying Christ to do what he has promised; and which therefore was as certain as a declared decree could possibly make it; and the petition is grounded on this promise and decree published by Christ, in which the petitioners express their hearty approbation of the coming of Christ, and earnest desire of this important and happy event. And if it be reasonable thus to pray for an event which is fixed and made certain by an unchangeable decree, and cannot be altered, as in the instance before us; then it is reasonable and proper to pray for any thing or any event which appears to us desirable and important, though we know God is unchangeable, and that all things and every event are fixed by an unalterable decree.

The apostle John says, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." [1 John v. 14, 15.] To ask for any thing *according to his will*, is to ask for those things which it is agreeable to his will to grant; and this is to be known only by what he has revealed. When we ask him to do what he has declared he will do, then we know we ask for that which is according to his will; and consequently that we have our petitions. But it will be asked, What are these things? I answer, that God will glorify himself in all things, and make the brightest display of his perfections and character forever; that he will promote and effect the greatest possible good of the universe; that he will make his church and kingdom perfectly happy and glorious forever; that he will accomplish all his designs and predictions, and fulfil all his promises to his church and people: and cause all things to work for the good of those who love him; and give his holy Spirit to all who ask him. These, I think, must be the things we ask, when we know that we pray for any thing *according to the will of God*, and consequently know that he heareth us, and that we have the petitions that we desired of him. But in all these instances we ask for that which God has said he will do, that is, has decreed that he will do them. And as it has been said before, if a decree in these instances does not render it unreasonable or improper to pray for their accomplishment; then, if God has decreed *whatsoever comes to pass*, this is not in the least inconsistent with our praying for whatever appears to us desirable and good, and may not be contrary to the will of God to grant. But here it must be observed, that when we ask for any particular things or events which, though it may not be contrary to the will of God to grant, yet he has in no way revealed that it is his will to grant our petitions; when we ask for any such thing, we must do it with an express or implicit reserve—*If it be according to the will of God*. Otherwise, or if it be not according to his will, we must withdraw our petition, and not desire to have it granted. Resignation to the will of God, whatever it may be, in all such instances, is essential to the pious petitions of a benevolent friend of God. And by thus referring to the will of God, and resigning to that, desiring it may be done in all cases, whatever petitions we may make, we do refer to the decrees of God, by which he has determined what he will do in every particular instance; for his will and his decrees are in this case one and the same, being fixed and unchangeable.

*Fourthly.* It is not only proper and important that the worshippers of God should express their desires of those things which they want, in praying for them; but were this not true, and were not asking for them the means and way of obtaining them; yet the pious friends of God would esteem it a privilege and enjoyment to be allowed and invited, "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make known their requests unto him." To them prayer is not a *task*, from which they would be glad to be excused, but they practise it with pleasure.—They have great support, enjoyment and happiness, in casting their cares upon God, and expressing the desires of their hearts to him. While others restrain



2. It is farther supposed, that the will of man is naturally averse, and disinclined, to obey the divine commands, which is the result of our fall and apostacy from God; and, through the corruption of our nature, we are prone to say, *Who is lord over us*, Psal. xii. 4. and, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him*, Job xxi. 15. This is the source of all that opposition which the heart of man expresses against the laws of God, while sinners entertain a fixed resolution to give laws to themselves; and, on the other hand, are wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh and of the Devil: This the apostle calls *fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind*; while at the same time, they *walk according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience*, Eph. ii. 2, 3. This will of the flesh is agreeable to the dictates of Satan, by whom it is content to be kept in perpetual bondage; his suggestions are agreeable to the corruption of nature; whereas, the command of God being contrary to it, as containing in them the signatures of his holiness, are grievous and burdensome to fallen man; the law is spiritual, and therefore it cannot be agreeable to those who are carnal, and, as it were sold under sin. And this discovers itself,

(1.) In that, sinful man is determined to do, not what is lawful, but what is pleasing to himself, not considering what he ought to do, as being accountable to God, the judge of all for his behaviour in this world; but whether it is agreeable to his own inclinations, and affords some present delight to his carnal appetite.

(2.) As for Satan, he uses his utmost endeavours to strengthen these resolutions, and increase the depravity and corruption

prayer before God, and say, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" the benevolent friend of God would pray, were it only for the enjoyment which he has in the exercise; and says in his heart, "I will call upon God as long as I live. And though he is certain that God is unchangeable, and that nothing is done, or will come to pass, which is not foreordained by him, this does not tend to prevent or in the least abate the pleasure and enjoyment he has in making known his requests to God, or his desire constantly to practise it: but this truth gives him support and consolation, and increases his delight in calling upon God, and renders it more desirable and pleasant unto him: yea, were not this a truth, he could not find any reason for making his requests known to him, or any delight in doing it: and would not have any encouragement, or even dare, to ask for any thing, as has been observed and shewn.

And now this matter is to be left to the judgment of every one who will attend to it. It is hoped that it appears evident, beyond all dispute, from the light in which this subject has been now set, that the doctrine of God's decreeing whatsoever comes to pass is not only consistent with all the exercises of true piety, but is the proper foundation for this, and is suited to excite and promote these exercises; and that there can be no real piety which is not consistent with this truth.

[HOPKINS'S SERMONS.]

of our nature; and, for this end, daily presents objects to our imaginations, that are agreeable to the desires of the flesh; and these are received with pleasure and delight, whereby a snare is laid for the ruin of the soul, so that it becomes more and more alienated from the life of God; and not only indifferent, as to matters of religion, but utterly averse to them. This is the reason of all the dishonour that is brought to God in the world; whereby it appears, that his will is not done therein, as it ought to be.

Moreover, as the will of man sets itself against the commanding will of God, so it expresses the same aversion to his providential will; which is not said indeed, to be done; but it ought to be submitted to, by us. We are as much inclined to find fault with what God does in the world, as we are to rebel against his law. This appears in our being discontented and uneasy with the allotments of providence, especially when we are under the afflicting hand of God; whereby we are apt to charge him as dealing hardly with us, because we have not those opportunities, we desire, to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, or some check is given to our corrupt appetites or inclinations. How ready are we to complain of injuries done us, as though God were obliged to give us whatever we would have, how contrary soever it may be to our real good and advantage, as well as his own glory! Of this we have many instances, in the perverse behaviour of the children of Israel in the wilderness, who were frequently complaining of the hardships they endured; and, by their murmuring against God, provoked him to send those terrible judgments which, as they might have foreseen, would be the consequence thereof. This is the most unreasonable behaviour towards him, who has a right to do what he will with his own, and directly contrary to that temper of mind which the gospel suggests; whereby we are taught, in whatsoever state or condition of life we are, therewith to be contented. It is, in both these respects, that we are instructed, in this petition, to pray, that *the will of the Lord may be done*. Which leads us to consider,

II. The subject-matter of what we are taught to pray for in this petition, when we say, *Thy will be done*. And,

1. With respect to God's commanding will, we are to pray, that he would incline and enable us to yield obedience to it; and accordingly,

(1.) We are to be earnest with him, that he would remove the ignorance and blindness of our minds, that we may see a beauty and glory in every thing that he commands; for, next to the Sovereignty of God, which is the first motive hereunto, the excellency of what he commands is to be considered as an inducement to obedience. Therefore we are to be convinced,

that his law is holy, his commandment holy, just, and good, Rom. vii. 12. or, that duty and interest are herein inseparably connected, so that the one can never be secured without the other. This is the work of the Spirit of God, when he directs and leads us in the way wherein we ought to walk.

(2.) We are to pray, that God would take away the obstinacy and perverseness of our wills, that our obedience may be matter of choice, and performed with delight, otherwise it cannot be pleasing to him; and accordingly we are to pray,

[1.] That it may be performed with the utmost sincerity, as approving ourselves not to men, but God, who searcheth the heart; and that it may proceed from a principle of spiritual life and grace, and be done with a single eye, to his glory, whose we are, and whom we desire to serve.

[2.] We are to pray, that our obedience may arise from a filial fear of God, and a love to him, and not barely a dread of punishment, or fear of his wrath, as the consequence of our rebellion against him; or from a mercenary frame of spirit, that looks at nothing farther than some advantages which we expect to receive from him; and that it may also proceed from a sense of gratitude for the many benefits which we receive from him, whereby we are, as it were, constrained to do his will.

[3.] This obedience ought to be universal, with respect to the matter thereof, and constant, with respect to our perseverance therein. We are not to choose to obey some of the divine commands, and refuse others; or to perform those duties which are most easy, and reject those that are difficult; or to obey the will of God, so far as it comports with our secular interest, and indent with him to be excused in those things that are inconsistent therewith: but we must leave it to him alone, to prescribe the matter of duty, and express an entire compliance therewith, whatsoever it be that he requires. Thus the Psalmist says, *Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments*, Psal. cxix. 6.

Moreover, this obedience must be constant, without our growing cold and indifferent therein, or desisting from it, according as our condition in the world is altered, as though we had nothing to do with God and religion, but when we are under some pressing difficulties; for that is to set our faces heaven-ward for a time, and afterwards to draw back unto perdition.

(2.) We are to pray that God would enable us to submit to his disposing will, as being satisfied that all the dispensations of his providence are right; and accordingly to say, with David, *Here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him*, 2 Sam. xv. 26. This consists,

[1.] In maintaining a quiet, easy, composed frame of spirit, fitted for the exercise of religious duties, though under trying dispensations of providence.

[2.] When we justify God, and lay the blame on ourselves, whatever afflictions we are exercised with. Thus the Psalmist speaks of himself as deserted, and God as *far from helping him*, he acknowledges the equity of his dispensations, when he says, *Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel*, Pal. xxii. 1. 3. or, as he elsewhere expresses himself, *The Lord is upright, he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him*, Psal. xcii. 15.

[3.] When we are disposed to bless God, at the same time, when he takes away outward mercies, as well as when he gives them : Thus Job, when he was stripped of all he had at once, says, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord*, Job i. 24. We are now to consider,

III. The manner in which the will of God is to be done : Accordingly we are taught to pray, that it may be *done in earth as it is in heaven* ; not that we are to suppose that the best of saints can arrive, while in this world, to the perfection of the heavenly state ; so that it is possible for them to do the will of God in the same manner, or degree, as it is done in heaven : Therefore the particle *AS* respects similitude, rather than equality, and all that we can infer from hence is, that there is some analogy or resemblance between the obedience of the saints here, and that of the inhabitants of heaven. This implies in it a desire,

1. That it may be done with great humility and reverence. Thus the angels, who have the character of Seraphims, are represented, in that emblem or vision which the prophet Isaiah saw, of the *Lord sitting on his throne*, Isa. vi. 1, 2. and the *Seraphims* attending him, as having their *faces covered with their wings*, in token of reverence and humility. And others are described as *casting their crowns before the throne*, Rev. vi. 10. intimating, that all the glory that is put upon them, is derived from him that sits on the throne, and that their honour is not to be regarded or mentioned, when compared with him who is the fountain thereof.

2. This expression farther implies in it a desire to do the will of God with all cheerfulness. Some think that this is intended in the vision which John saw concerning the seven angels, who were employed to inflict the seven last plagues on the church's enemies, when they are represented as doing it *with harps in their hands*, and as singing the praises of God at the same time, Rev. xv. 1—3.

3. We are said to do the will of God on earth, as it is done by the angels in heaven, when we do it with faithfulness : Thus

when they are represented as ministering to God's people, and, as such, having the charge over them to keep them in all their ways, they are spoken of as doing this faithfully; as it is said, *They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone*, Psal. xci. 11, 12.

4. The angels are farther represented as a pattern of diligence in doing the will of God: Thus it is said of the angel Gabriel, that when the word of command was given him to carry a message to Daniel, he *fled swiftly*, being expeditious in fulfilling the work he was employed about, Dan. ix. 21.

5. They are said to do the will of God, with zeal and fervency; and, for this reason, some think they are called, in the scripture but now mentioned, *seraphims*; or, as they are elsewhere styled, *A flaming fire*, Psal. civ. 4.

6. The angels are said to do the will of God sincerely: Thus the inhabitants of heaven are represented, as having *no guile found in their mouths*, and *being without fault before the throne of God*, Prov. xxii. 2.

7. They are said to do the will of God with constancy: Thus we read of them as *serving him day and night in his temple*, chap. vii. 15. and the angels, which are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation, are said *always to behold the face of God in heaven*, Mat. xviii. 10. that is, they never give out, or are weary of his service: We have herein an excellent example set before us, and are exhorted to pray, that in our measure we may yield the like obedience to God, though we fall very short of doing it, as they do who are in a perfect state. We are therefore herein taught to lift up our hearts to God, in a way of adoration, confession, and supplication, *q. d.* "We acknowledge, O Lord, that thou hast a right to the obedience of all creatures, and hast been pleased to give them thy law as the rule thereof. It is our glory, as well as our happiness, to be thy servants; for thy law is holy, thy commandment holy, just and good: But we acknowledge and confess before thee, that we have rebelled against thee, and have refused to yield obedience to thy commands: And when we behold the universal corruption of human nature, we blush and are ashamed to think how little glory is brought to thy name, by the service and obedience of thy creatures here below. In heaven thy will is done perfectly, by those who serve thee with the greatest delight and pleasure; but on earth thou hast but little glory; it is an instance of condescending goodness that thou hast not, long since, abandoned and forsook it, and thereby rendered it like hell: But, we beseech thee, take to thyself thy great power, and reign in the hearts of men; subdue their wills thyself, that they may cheerfully and constantly obey."

"thy commanding will, and submit to thy providential will,  
 "as being satisfied that all thy dispensations are right, and  
 "shall tend to thy glory, and the welfare of all that fear thy  
 "name."

QUEST. CXCIII. *What do we pray for in the fourth petition?*

ANSW. In the fourth petition, [which is, *Give us this day our daily bread,*] acknowledging, that in Adam, and by our sin, we have forfeited our right to all the outward blessings of this life, and deserve to be wholly deprived of them by God, and to have them cursed to us in the use of them; and, that neither they of themselves are able to sustain us, nor we to merit, or by our own industry, to procure them, but prone to desire, get, and use them unlawfully; we pray for ourselves and others, that both they and we, waiting upon the providence of God from day to day, in the use of lawful means, may, of his free gift, and, as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best, enjoy a competent portion of them, and have the same continued and blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of them, and contentment in them; and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort.

**I**N order to our understanding this petition, we must first consider what is meant by *bread*. Some have thought that our Saviour hereby intends spiritual mercies, as denoting that bread which is suited to the necessities of our souls, and particularly that we may have an interest in Christ, who is called, *The bread of life*, John vi. 35. *The living bread which came down from heaven*, ver. 51. But though it must be allowed, that this is a blessing far exceeding all those that are of a temporal nature, as much as the happiness of the soul is preferable to that of the body; and it is, doubtless, to be made the subject of our daily and importunate requests to God, *q. d.* give me an interest in Christ, or else I can have no delight or pleasure in any of the enjoyments of life: Yet this does not seem to be intended by our Saviour in this petition; but that bread which we pray for has a more immediate respect to the blessings of this life, which, according to the scripture-mode of speaking, are often set forth by *bread*. Thus God tells Adam, after his fall, *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*, Gen. iii. 19. by which we are to understand, that he should take a great deal of pains to provide for himself the necessities of life. So when God promises outward blessings to his people, he tells them, that *bread shall be given them*, and



their waters shall be sure, Isa. xxxiii. 16. And elsewhere, *I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread*, Psal. cxxxii. 15. This is what we are taught to pray for in this petition; in which we may observe,

I. That there are some things supposed, namely,

1. That, by our sins, we have forfeited a right to the outward blessings of this life. This was the consequence of the forfeiture of life itself; and it was a part of the curse, that we were exposed to by our rebellion against, and apostacy from God. If he should deprive us of all the conveniences of life, and thereby imbitter it to us; so that we should be almost inclined to make that unhappy choice that Job did, of *strangling and death, rather than life*, Job vii. 15. there would be no reason to say, there is unrighteousness with God.

2. It is farther supposed, that outward blessings are God's free gift to us. Whether we have a greater or a smaller portion thereof, they are to be acknowledged as the fruits of divine bounty: It is God that spreads a table for us; to some he gives a small measure, and to others a larger share of temporal good things; but, whatever we enjoy, it is to be owned as the effect of his providential goodness. This, indeed, does not exclude the use of those means that are ordained for the preserving of life, and our obtaining the good things thereof; but we must, at the same time, acknowledge, that all that wisdom, industry, and success that attends our endeavours, is from God; it is he that *giveth power to get wealth*, Deut. viii. 18. or, as it is elsewhere said, *The rich and poor meet together*; that is, they both agree in this, that *the Lord is the Maker of them all*, Prov. xxii. 2. that is, whatever be their circumstances in the world, it is he that provides, what they have, for them. And if what we enjoy is sweetened and sanctified to us for our good, so that we have not only the conveniences of life, but a blessing with them, and are enabled to make a right use and improvement of them, to the glory of God and the advantage of ourselves and others; this must also be reckoned an instance of divine favour, or the gift of God.

3. It is farther supposed, that temporal good things may lawfully be prayed for. As the providence of God does not, as was before observed, exclude the use of means; so it is not inconsistent with, but rather an inducement to prayer; and, indeed, prayer is an ascribing glory to God, as the fountain of all we enjoy; without which, it would be an affront to the divine Majesty, to expect any blessing from him. This is applicable to prayer in general, and, in particular, to our making supplication for outward blessings.

I. We shall consider the subject-matter of the petition, or

what we are to understand when we say, *Give us this day our daily bread.*

1. The thing prayed for, is *bread*; whereby our Saviour intimates, that we are to set due bounds to our desires, when we are pressing after outward blessings. He does not order us to importune with God for the great things of this life; but rather for those things which are necessary, in the enjoyment whereof, we may the better be enabled to glorify him: He does not put his followers upon asking for crowns and sceptres; as though his kingdom were of this world, as some, who were influenced by carnal motives, fondly imagined; being ready to expect that many worldly advantages would accrue from their adhering to him; and, when they found themselves mistaken, shamefully deserted his cause, and relinquished the profession that they once made of him: But Christ never gave his people ground to expect that their secular interest should be promoted by embracing the gospel: Accordingly, when any one seemed desirous of being his disciple, he generally put this trying question to him; whether he was content to leave all, and follow him, or to lead a mean life in the world, and be hated of all men for his name's sake? His disciples, indeed, were sometimes filled with too great solicitude about their future circumstances in life; but he encourages them to hope for necessary provisions, when he says, *Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things*, Matt. vi. 32. and it is always found, that where there is the greatest degree of faith, it tends to moderate our affections as to the things of this world; and if at any time, they are apt to exceed their due bounds, it gives a check to them, as the prophet says to Baruch: *Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not*, Jer. xlv. 5. We have an admirable instance of this in Jacob; who, when he was in a most destitute condition, flying from his father's house, to Padan-aram, did not know what entertainment he should meet with there. The principal thing which he desires, together with the divine presence and protection, is, that he might have *bread to eat, and raiment to put on*, Gen. xxviii. 20. He does not ask, that people and nations might bow down to him; or that God would take away the life of his brother Esau, whose malicious design against him, occasioned his present hazardous journey; he is not anxiously concerned for the great things of this world, but only desires that he may have the necessaries of life. And Agar's prayer is not unlike this, who says, *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me*, Prov. xxx. 8. Such a frame of spirit our Saviour supposes them to have, who thus address themselves to God in prayer for bread, or the outward accommodations of life.

2. It is called, *our bread*; the meaning of which is, that there is a distinct property which every one has, by the allotment of providence, in those outward blessings which God has given him, whatever be the measure or proportion thereof: This we are taught to acknowledge with thankfulness, *q. d.* Thou didst not design that one man should take possession of the whole world, or engross to himself all its stores, and that the rest should starve and perish for want of the necessities of life; herein thy wisdom and sovereignty appears, and to this it is owing, that there are some things which we have a right to, distinct from others: not without, but by the gift and blessing of providence. And therefore, whatsoever God thinks fit that we should receive, we call our own, and as such, pray for it; otherwise we are not in the least to desire or covet it, inasmuch as we are taught to pray only for that which we may call ours, as having a natural or civil right to it, which we have not to that which belongs to another.

Now there are two ways by which we are said to receive outward blessings, which we may call our own from the hand of God, which are more especially included in this petition.

(1.) As God, by his distinguishing hand, gives us that measure of outward blessings which he sees convenient for us, and that either, by succeeding our endeavours, or by supplying our wants in some way which was altogether unexpected by us, and thereby making provision for the comfort of our lives.—There is sometimes a chain of providences concurring hereunto; as God speaks of his *hearing the heavens*, Hos. ii. 21, 22. that, when they want store of water, he may furnish them therewith, and *they may hear the earth*, so as to moisten it with showers, when parched, and becoming unfruitful; and *that the earth may hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil*, so as to produce them; and that *these may hear*, that is, may be distributed among God's people, as he sees they want them; and the Psalmist says, *He watereth the hills from his chambers: The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart*, Psal. civ. 13—15. So that there are various causes and effects, subservient to each other, which are all owing to the blessing of providence, whereby we come to possess that portion of the good things of this life, which are allotted for us.

(2.) The outward blessings of this life may be called ours when God is pleased to make them blessings to us, and give us the enjoyment thereof. He must add his blessings to all the mercies he bestows, or else they will not conduce to our

happiness; nor can the general end, designed hereby, be answered; without this, the bread we eat, would no more nourish us, than husks or chaff; our garments, without this, could no more contribute to our being warm, than if they were put upon a statue; and the air we breathe, would rather stifle than refresh us. Thus it is said, *Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God*, Deut. viii. 3. that is, not barely by second causes, or the means we use, in order to the maintaining life and health, or any of the comforts thereof; but, by the blessing of God, or his power and providence, that these ends are answered.

And it is he alone who can give us the comfortable enjoyment thereof: This all have not; their tables are plentifully furnished, but they want that measure of health which is necessary for their taking in, or receiving advantage from them; as it is said of the sick man, that *his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat*, Job xxxiii. 20. Such do, as it were, starve in the midst of plenty. And there are others, who, though they have a great deal of the world, and are not hindered from the enjoyment of it by the weakness or decays of nature; yet they are made unhappy by the temper of their minds; as there are some that abound in riches, who may, nevertheless be said to be poor, because they want an heart to use what they have, which is God peculiar blessing: Thus the wise man says, *Every man to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour, this is the gift of God*, Eccl. v. 19. For these things we are dependent on him; and this is what we intend, when we pray that God would *give us our bread*.

3. We are farther taught to pray, that God would give us our bread *this day*, thereby denoting that we are to desire to have our present necessities supplied, as those who cannot be certain that we shall live till to-morrow. How often does God break the thread of our lives in an instant, without giving us any notice of it beforehand? And therefore we may truly say in the midst of life, we are in death, and are advised to take no thought for the morrow, but to leave that entirely to the providence of God: Food nourishes but for a day, so that what we now receive will not suffice us to-morrow. Nature is always craving supplies, and therefore we are taught to have a continual recourse to God by prayer for them: And, if we look farther than this present time, it is to be with this condition, that the Lord has determined to prolong our lives, and thereby renders it necessary for us to pray for those things that will be needful for the support thereof: This seems to be the meaning of that variation of expression, which the evangelist Luke

makes use of, when he says, *Give us day by day our daily bread*, Luke xi. 3. And it may obviate an objection, as it will be inferred by some, that if we are not to pray for what respects our future condition in this world, we are not to make provision for it: Whereas, this is contrary to what we are exhorted to do, by being led to consider the provision which the smallest insects make for their subsistence; *The ant provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest*, Prov. vi. 8. And the apostle says, *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*, 1 Tim. v. 8. This therefore we ought to do; and accordingly we are to pray, that God would succeed our lawful endeavours, in order thereunto; though we must do it with this limitation, as maintaining a constant sense that our times are in his hand, so that if he should be pleased to grant us a longer or shorter lease of our lives, which to us is altogether uncertain, we are to beg of him, that we may never be destitute of what is necessary for our glorifying him therein.

4. This petition is to be considered as respecting others as well as ourselves; *Give us*, &c. whereby we express a concern for their advantage in what respects the good things of this life. The blessings of providence flow from an inexhaustible fountain; and therefore we are not to think that, by desiring that others may have a supply of their wants, there will not be enough remaining for us.

And this should always teach us to bear our part in relieving others, that they may not, through our neglect, perish for want of the necessaries of this life: Thus we are exhorted *to deal our bread to the hungry, to bring the poor that are cast out to our houses, and when we see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide ourselves from our own flesh*, Isa. lviii. 7. And Job having been severely accused by his friends, as though all those afflictions that befel him, were in judgment for his having oppressed and *forsaken the poor, and violently taken away an house which he builded not*, as Zophar insinuates, Job xx. 19. vindicates himself from the charge in the strongest terms, when he says, *I have not withheld the poor from their desire, nor caused the eyes of the widow to fail; nor eaten my morsel myself alone, so that the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; nor seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering*, chap. xxxi. 16—19. This is not only to pray, that God would give others their daily bread; but to help them, so far as it is in our power, which is very agreeable to what we pray for in their behalf, as well as our own, when we say, as in this petition, *Give us this day our daily bread*.

Thus concerning the matter of this petition, as explained in

this answer; of which we shall give a summary account in the following meditation, which may be of use for the reducing our Saviour's direction into practice: Accordingly we address him in this manner, " Our eyes wait on thee, O thou preserver of  
" men, who givest to all their meat in due season. We are  
" poor, indigent creatures, whose necessities oblige us to re-  
" quest a daily supply, for our outward as well as spiritual  
" wants. Thou hast granted us life and favour; and, having  
" obtained help from thee, we continue unto this day. Thou  
" preparest a table for us; our cup runneth over; we have  
" never been wholly destitute of those outward blessings which  
" tend to make our pilgrimage, through this world, easy and  
" comfortable: We therefore adore thee for the care and good-  
" ness of thy providence, which continues to us forfeited  
" blessings. We have, by our sins, deserved to be deprived  
" of all the good things we enjoy, which we have not used to  
" thy glory, as we ought to have done. We acknowledge our-  
" selves less than the least of all thy mercies; yet thou hast  
" encouraged us to pray and hope for the continuance thereof:  
" We leave it to thine infinite wisdom, to chuse that condition  
" of life which thou seest best for us. It is not the great  
" things of this world that we are solicitous about, but that  
" portion thereof which is necessary to our glorifying thee  
" therein. Thou hast made it our duty, and accordingly we  
" desire, to use that industry which is necessary to attain a  
" comfortable subsistence in the world; yet we are sensible  
" that the success thereof is wholly owing to thy blessing: We  
" therefore beg, that thou wouldst prosper our undertaking;  
" since it is thy blessing alone that maketh rich, and addeth  
" no sorrow therewith. Keep our desires after the world with-  
" in their due bounds; and enable us to be content with what  
" thou art pleased to allot for us, that our hearts may not be  
" turned aside thereby, from an earnest pursuit after that bread  
" which perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life. If thou  
" art pleased to give us the riches of this world, let not our  
" hearts be set upon them; and if thou hast ordained that we  
" should be in low circumstances therein, may the frame of our  
" spirits be suited thereunto, and this condition of life be sanc-  
" tified, that it may appear, that we are not too low to be the  
" objects of thy special regard and discriminating grace; that  
" having nothing, we may really possess all things, in having  
" an interest in thy love. As to what concerns our future  
" condition in this world, though thou hast made it our duty  
" to use a provident care that we may not be reduced to those  
" straits that would render the last stage of life uncomfortable;  
" yet we would do this with a constant sense of the uncer-  
" tainty of life, since our times are in thy hand, our circum-



“stances in the world at thy disposal, and we rejoice that they  
 “are so: Therefore we earnestly beg, that if it be thy sove-  
 “reign will to call us soon out of it, that we may be as well  
 “pleased to leave, as ever we were to enjoy it, as being blessed  
 “with a well-grounded hope of a better life: And, if it be con-  
 “sistent with thy will, that our lives be prolonged in the  
 “world, *Give us day by day our daily bread*, that we may, at  
 “all times, experience, that thou dost abundantly bless our pro-  
 “vision, and satisfy us with those things which thou seest  
 “needful for us, till we come to our journey’s end, and are  
 “possessed of that perfect blessedness which thou hast re-  
 “served for thy saints in a better world.”

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**QUEST. CXCIV.** *What do we pray for in the fifth petition?*

**ANSW.** In the fifth petition, [which is, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*] acknowledging that we, and all others, are guilty both of original and actual sin, and thereby become debtors to the justice of God; and that neither we, nor any other creature, can make the least satisfaction for that debt. We pray for ourselves and others, that God of his free grace would, through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ apprehended and applied by faith, acquit us both from the guilt and punishment of sin, accept us in his Beloved, continue his favour and grace to us, pardon our daily failings, and fill us with peace and joy, in giving us daily more and more assurance of forgiveness, which we are the rather emboldened to ask, and encouraged to expect when we have this testimony in ourselves, that we, from the heart, forgive others their offences.

**H**AVING been directed, in the former petition, to pray for outward blessings; we are now led to ask for forgiveness of sin; and it is with very good reason that these two petitions are joined together, inasmuch as we cannot expect that God should give us the good things of this life, which are all forfeited by us, much less, that we should have them bestowed on us in mercy, and for our good, unless he is pleased to forgive those sins, whereby we provoke him to withhold them from us: Neither can we take comfort in any outward blessings, while our consciences are burdened with a sense of the guilt of sin, and we have nothing to expect, as the consequence thereof, but to be separated from his presence; therefore we are taught to pray, that God would *forgive us our sins*, as one evangelist expresses it, or our *debts*, as it is in the other.

From whence it may be observed, in general, that sin is a debt. As it is contrary to the holiness of God, it is a stain and blemish, a dishonour and reproach to us; as it is a violation of his law it is a crime; and, as to what respects the guilt which we contract hereby, it is called *a debt*; which is the principal thing considered in this petition. There was a debt of obedience demanded from us as creatures: and, in case of the failure hereof, or any other sin committed by us, there was a threatening denounced, pursuant to the sanction of the law, from whence arises a debt of punishment; and in this respect it is that we are directed, more especially, in this petition, to pray for forgiveness. There are several things which respect the nature of forgiveness, as founded on the satisfaction given by Christ, as our Surety: which have been largely insisted on under some foregoing answers\*: Therefore, the method we shall observe, in considering the subject-matter of this petition, shall be,

I. To take a view of sinful man as charged with guilt, and rendered uneasy under a sense thereof.

II. How he is to address himself to God by faith and prayer for forgiveness. And,

III. The encouragement which he has to hope that his prayer will be answered. Under which head we shall take occasion to consider how far that disposition which we have to forgive others, is an evidence hereof.

I. Concerning the charge of guilt upon us, and that uneasiness which is the consequence thereof. Here we consider the sinner as apprehended and standing before God, the Judge of all; an accusation brought in against him, in which he is charged with apostacy and rebellion against his rightful Lord and Sovereign, and, as the consequence thereof, his nature is vitiated and depraved, his heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; from whence proceed all actual transgressions, with their respective aggravations, which, according to the tenor of the law of God, deserve his wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come†. And this charge is made good against him by such convincing evidence, that he must be very much unacquainted with himself, and a stranger to the law of God, if he does not see it: But if we suppose him stupid, and persisting in his own vindication, through the blindness of his mind, and hardness of his heart, and ready to say with Ephraim, *In all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin*, Hos. xii. 8. yet the charge will, notwithstanding, appear to be just, and every mouth shall be stopped, and they are forced to confess themselves guilty before God:

\* See vol. II. 289—290 and vol. III. 72.

† See Quest. CLII.

Upon this, conscience is awakened, and trembles at the thoughts of falling into the hands of an absolute God, who appears no otherwise to him than as a consuming fire; his terrors set themselves in array against him, and this cannot but fill him with the greatest anguish, especially because there is no method which he can find out, to free himself from that misery, which he dreads as the consequence thereof.

If he pretends to extenuate his crimes, it will not avail him; and if his own conscience does not come in as a witness against him, as having been a party concerned in the rebellion, it is an argument that it is rendered stupid by a continuance therein: Nothing that it can allege in its own vindication, will be regarded in the court of heaven, but rather tend to add weight to the guilt he has contracted; for the omniscience of God will bring an unanswerable charge against him, as being a transgressor of his law, and thereby liable to condemnation, upon which, vindictive justice will demand satisfaction.

If he makes an overture to pay the debt, he must either yield sinless obedience, which is impossible, from the nature of the thing; or bear the stroke of justice, and suffer the punishment that is due to him, which, if he is content to do, he knows not what it is to fall into the hands of the living God, or to be plunged into an abyss of endless misery. If he thinks that he shall be secure by flying from justice, this would be a vain attempt, since God is omnipresent; and *there is no darkness or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves*, Job xxxiv. 52.

Nothing therefore remains, but that he make supplication to his Judge, that he would pass by the crimes he has committed, without demanding satisfaction: But this is to desire, that he would act contrary to the holiness of his nature; which would be such a blemish on his perfections, that he is obliged to reject: What is this but to relinquish his throne, deny his sovereignty, and act contrary to his own law, which is the rule of his government, whereby sinners will take occasion to transgress, expecting that they may do this with impunity?

But, is there no intercessor that will plead his cause, or appear for him in the court of heaven? this cannot be done but by one who is able to make an atonement, and thereby secure the glory of divine justice, by having the debt transferred or placed to his account, and giving a full satisfaction for it; but this belongs to none but our Lord Jesus Christ, who has obtained redemption and forgiveness through his blood; and none can take encouragement from hence, but he that addresses himself to God by faith, which we are now considering the sinner as destitute of, and therefore the charge of guilt remains upon him. And it is certain, that the consequence

hereof is such, as will tend to fill him with the greatest uneasiness under the burthen that lies on his conscience, which has a perpetual dread of the execution of the sentence that is in force against him. This wounds his spirits; and it is impossible for any one to apply healing medicines, but by directing him according to the prescription contained in the gospel, to seek forgiveness in that way in which God applies it, in and through a Mediator.

II. We are now to consider, how a person is to address himself to God by faith and prayer for forgiveness, which is the principal thing designed in this petition. Here it is to be acknowledged, that when we draw nigh to God, it is with a sense of guilt, and, it may be, with great distress of conscience, arising from it; yet it differs very much from what was observed under the last head, when we considered a sinner as standing before an absolute God, without any hope of obtaining forgiveness, since that cannot but fill him with dread and horror; whereas, this is an expedient for his obtaining a settled peace of conscience; and, indeed, there is nothing of greater importance, than our performing this duty in a right manner. And, in order thereunto, let it be considered,

1. That when we pray for forgiveness of sin it is supposed, that none can bestow this blessing upon us but God. No one has a right to forgive an offence, but he against whom it is committed: This will appear, if we consider sin as a neglect or refusal to pay a debt of obedience, which is due from us, to God, and consequently it would be an invading his right, for any one who had no power to demand it, to pretend to give a discharge to the sinner as an insolvent debtor: This would be to act like the person mentioned in the parable, who was appointed indeed, to receive his lord's debts, but not to cancel them; and therefore, our Saviour calls him an *unjust steward*; and he is said to have *wasted his lord's goods*, by compounding the debts which were owing to him without his order, Luke xvi. 1. & seq. Now, since obedience, as it is a religious duty is due to God alone; it is only he that can give a discharge to those who have not performed it: and since it belongs to him as a judge and law-giver, to punish offenders, it would be the highest affront to him for a creature to pretend to this prerogative; and therefore God appropriates it to himself, when he says, *I even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake*, Isa. xlii. 25. which expression is to be understood of him exclusive of all others; accordingly, when the Jews charge our Saviour with blasphemy on his forgiving sins, and say, *Who can forgive sins but God only?* the proposition was true, how false soever the inference, which

they deduce from thence to disprove his Deity, might be. We shall now consider,

2. That all ought to pray for forgiveness, and in what sense this is to be done,

(1.) All ought to pray for forgiveness: One would think, that this is so evident, and agreeable to the condition of fallen man, as well as founded on many scriptures, and expressly commanded in this petition, which we are explaining, that it is needless to give a farther proof of it; but this we are obliged to do, inasmuch as some have asserted that a justified person ought not to pray for pardon of sin, since this is what is already done: This is an inference from what they advance, who plead for actual justification from eternity; and therefore it is, as they suppose, equally absurd for such an one to pray, that God would forgive him, as it is to pray that he would choose them to eternal life, or that Christ would satisfy divine justice for the sins of his people, which he has already done. It is, indeed, not very easy to understand what some persons mean, when they insist on this subject, inasmuch as they lay down propositions, without sufficiently explaining them; and whatever they allege in their vindication, that they intend nothing else hereby but what is agreeable to the sentiments of the reformed churches, it is certain, that they advance several things, or, at least, make use of such unguarded expressions as are altogether disowned by them; and, at the same time, give occasion to some, to run into the contrary extreme, who, for fear of being thought to assert eternal justification, deny the eternal purpose of God relating thereunto.

But whatever they intend when they say, that a justified person ought not to pray for pardon of sin; the contrary to this is sufficiently evident from scripture. For every believer is a justified person; therefore, if we have any instance of believers praying for the pardon of sin, this sufficiently confutes that absurd notion which we are opposing. Now that many have prayed for pardon of sin, who have, at the same time, been true believers, is evident, from David's praying for the pardon of sin, as he often does: Thus he says, in Psal. xlv. 11. *For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great*; and yet, at the same time, he expresses himself like a justified person; *O my God, I trust in thee*, ver. 2. and ver. 5. *Thou art the God of my salvation*: And, in Psal. cxliii. 2. he prays, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*; yet, at the same time, he appears to be a believer; for he speaks, in ver. 8. of his *trusting in*, and *lifting up his soul to God*, and *fleeing to him*, that he would *hide him*, ver. 9. which are all acts of justifying faith; and, in Psal. li. 1. he prays, *Have mercy upon me, O God, ac-*

*According to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions; and, in ver. 9. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities:* Whereas he had an intimation before from God, that he had pardoned his sin, 2 Sam. xii. 13. which, as appears by the preface to this Psalm, was the occasion of its composure; so that the Spirit of God hereby put words into his mouth, and taught him, notwithstanding the assurance he had from him of his having obtained forgiveness, to pray for it: And the apostle Paul was in a justified state, when he expressed his earnest desire of being *found in Christ, not having his own righteousness; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,* Phil. iii. 9. This might also be argued from all those scriptures, that represent believers as praying for salvation, which cannot be done without praying for forgiveness of sin, as being inseparably connected therewith. I shall therefore add no more concerning the obligation which all are under, to pray for the pardon of sin, but proceed to consider,

(2.) In what sense we are to pray for it. This may, without much difficulty, be determined, if we rightly state the doctrine of justification, which, if it be considered as an immanent act in God, or the eternal purpose of his will, not to impute sin, which is what divines call decretive justification, it is to be allowed, that this is no more to be prayed for than eternal election; neither are we to pray, that Christ may be constituted the Head and Surety of his elect, or, that he might finish transgressions, make an end of sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness, for that is already done. But, inasmuch as the scripture often speaks of justification as consisting in the application of Christ's righteousness, or that right we have to lay claim to it, which is styled justification by faith, and is the only foundation on which we build our hope, that we have an interest in what Christ did and suffered, and are thereby discharged from guilt and condemnation. This cannot be before we believe; and in this sense we pray that God would justify us: Now since forgiveness of sin is a branch of justification, it is, in this sense that we pray for the pardon of sin. And this includes in it,

[1.] An earnest desire that God would not lay those sins to our charge that we daily commit; or, that he would not, as the Psalmist says, *enter into judgment with us,* Psal. cxlii. 2. And, as the consequence hereof, we pray, that God would not punish us as our iniquities deserve. This is to pray for the application of Christ's righteousness as the ground and foundation of our claim to forgiveness.



[2.] We are to pray for the comfortable fruits and effects of forgiveness, that *being justified by faith, we may have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and access by faith, into this grace wherein we stand*, Rom. v. 1, 2. or, that we may be able to conclude, that our persons and services are accepted in the Beloved; and that Christ hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

[3.] We are to pray for the assurance or comfortable sense hereof, that hereby we may rejoice in hope of the glory of God: And, inasmuch as we daily contract guilt, we are to pray that this blessing may be daily applied to us, and that, both living and dying, we may be dealt with as those who are interested in Christ's righteousness as our Surety and Redeemer.

If it be objected, that pardon of sin is a blessing that every believer has; and therefore he ought not to pray for it. To this I answer, that there are many privileges which God does, or will certainly bestow upon his people, which they are, nevertheless, to pray for; otherwise they, who are in a state of grace, are not to pray for perseverance in grace; because they are assured that it shall be maintained unto salvation, according to God's promise: And, indeed, whatever promises are contained in the covenant of grace, a believer ought not, according to this method of reasoning, to pray that God would apply them to him, and so glorify his faithfulness in accomplishing them, since he is certainly persuaded that he will do it; whereas, all allow that we are to pray for this privilege: Therefore, if we have a full assurance that God has forgiven our sins; yet, inasmuch as we daily contract guilt, we are daily to pray, that he would not lay it to our charge, or deal with us as our iniquities deserve.

3. We shall now consider, how we are to address ourselves to God, or what views we are to have of him when we pray for forgiveness of sin. This depends on the idea we have of those perfections which he glorifies in bestowing this privilege; and these are, more especially, his mercy, grace and faithfulness, in accomplishing what he has promised in the covenant of grace. As for his justice, that is considered, as will be observed under a following head, as having received a full satisfaction; but this is concerned in the purchase, not in the application of forgiveness; and therefore, though God, in this respect, appears with the glory of a Judge, resolving to make no abatements of the debt which was contracted, that he may thereby express his utmost detestation of the sins committed: in this sense forgiveness is not to be obtained by entreaty; for it is inconsistent with the character of a Judge, to be moved thereby, and contrary to the demands of law and justice. But,

on the other hand, when we draw nigh to him, we consider him as a Father who delights in mercy, as it is particularly intimated in the preface to this prayer; and therefore we do not come before him as summoned to stand at his tribunal, and to be weighed in the balance by him, in which respect we would be found wanting, and, if our iniquities should be marked by him, could not stand; but we consider ourselves as invited to come into his presence, in hope of obtaining this privilege; and we consider him as he has revealed himself in the gospel, in which we are told, that there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, not as the criminal fears his judge, who is ready to pass sentence upon him; but as a child comes into his father's presence with such a fear as proceeds from love, and is the result of that encouragement which is given him, that he should be accepted in his sight: And, the great inducement hereunto, is the intimation that he has given thereof in the promises of the covenant of grace, and particularly those that respect forgiveness, in which he has discovered himself as a God ready to pardon, *gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness*, Neh. ix. 17. with whom is *plenteous redemption*, Psal. cxxx. 7. he also styles himself, *Our God, who will abundantly pardon*, inasmuch as *his thoughts and ways are above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth*, Isa. lv. 7—9. and he has likewise promised that he will cast all the sins of his people into the depths of the sea: Therefore they consider him not only as glorifying his mercy, but as performing his truth, and acting agreeably to his faithfulness, Micah vii. 19, 20. and, all this depends entirely on the discoveries he has made of himself to us through a Mediator: This leads us to consider,

4. The way in which God bestows this blessing, and we are to seek it at his hand by faith and prayer. We have before observed, that it would be an affront to the divine Majesty, to suppose that he will extend mercy to guilty sinners, without securing the glory of his vindictive justice; and this depends wholly on the satisfaction that Christ has given to it: Therefore we are to beg forgiveness for his sake, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for his sake, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; we are therefore first considered as having his righteousness imputed to us, and then this blessing, which we pray for, is applied to us. In this method of praying for forgiveness, we take occasion to adore the wisdom of God, which has found out this expedient to hallow or sanctify his own name, as well as secure to us an interest in his love, and, at the same time, we express the high esteem we have for the person of Christ, who has procured it for us, as also the infinite value of the price he paid in order

thereunto; and we refer our cause to him, that, as our Advocate, he would appear on our behalf, in the merit of his obedience and sufferings; that our petition may be granted in such a way, that God hereby may have the highest revenue of glory redounding to himself, and we receive the blessings consequent thereupon.

5. We are now to consider the frame of spirit with which we are to pray for forgiveness. There is no grace but what is to be exercised in prayer, agreeably to the subject-matter thereof; and it is evident, from the nature of the thing, that when we pray for forgiveness, it ought to be with a penitent frame of spirit: Accordingly repentance and forgiveness of sins are often connected in scripture. Thus it is said, *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*, Acts iii. 19. not that we are to suppose that repentance, or any other grace, is the cause of God's secret purpose or determination to forgive sin, or, that he accepts of it as any part of that atonement or satisfaction which his justice requires to be made for it; for this is to ascribe that to it which belongs entirely to Christ's righteousness; yet repentance is so far necessary to forgiveness, that it would be a very preposterous thing for any one to ask this favour either of God or man without it. Not to repent of a crime committed, is, in effect, a pleading for it, and a tacit resolution to persist in it, which disqualifies us from pleading a pardon; and it would be contrary to the divine perfections for God to give it to those who hereby do, as it were, practically disown their need of it.

Now the necessity of repentance, in those who are praying and hoping for forgiveness, appears from the connexion that there is between it, and all other graces; which, though distinguished, are not separated from it, and they are, all of them, necessary to salvation, which we can, by no means attain to, without being forgiven.

III. We proceed to consider, the encouragement that they, who plead for forgiveness with the exercise of faith, repentance and other graces, have to expect, that they shall be heard and answered; and more particularly, how far that disposition, which we have to forgive others is an evidence thereof.

1. Grace exercised, is an evidence of forgiveness. This appears, in that it is a work and fruit of the Spirit, a branch of sanctification, and an earnest of eternal life; and, in this respect, that good work may be truly said to be begun, which God will certainly carry on, and perfect in glory: of this, I say, every grace, provided it be true and genuine, is an evidence, from whence we may conclude our right to forgiveness, or justification, which is inseparably connected with it; as the

apostle says, *Whom he called; them he justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified*, Rom. viii. 30.

2. We are now to consider how far, or in what respect, our exercising forgiveness towards others, is an evidence of our having obtained forgiveness from God, which is the sense given in those words, *as we forgive our debtors*. We may here observe the variation of the expression in Matthew and Luke; in the former it is said, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*; and, in the latter, *Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us*. There is a little difficulty contained in the sense of the particles, *AS* and *FOR*, which must be so explained, that the sense of the petition, in both evangelists may appear to be the same: Therefore, when Matthew says, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*, the particle *AS*, is not a note of equality, but of similitude; and accordingly it signifies, that we are to forgive others, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us; or, as we hope to obtain forgiveness from him; though, if we compare these two together, there is an infinite disproportion between them, as to the injuries forgiven, and other circumstances that attend the action. The injuries that are done to us are very small, if compared with the crimes that we commit against God; and when we are said to forgive them, there is no comparison between it and that forgiveness which we desire from the hand of God. God's forgiving us is, indeed, a motive to us to forgive others, but one is not the measure, or standard of the other: It therefore implies, that while we ask for forgiveness, we ought to do it with a becoming frame of spirit, as those who are inclined to forgive others, and, at the same time to bless God, that he has wrought this disposition in us; and, so far as we make use of it, as an argument in prayer, the meaning thereof is, that since he has made it our duty, and we trust, has also given us this grace to forgive others; we hope, that he will, in like manner, *forgive us our trespasses*.

We are now to consider the petition as laid down by the evangelist Luke; *Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us*: which is, for substance, the same with that in Matthew, as but now explained: Accordingly the particle *FOR*, is not causal, but demonstrative; and therefore we are not to understand it as though our forgiving others were the ground and reason of God's forgiving us, since that would be to put it in the room of Christ's righteousness; but the meaning is, that we are encouraged to hope that he will forgive us, from this demonstrative evidence; since he has given us that grace which inclines and disposes us to forgive

others; from whence we have ground to conclude, that we shall obtain the blessing we pray for.

This leads us to consider the nature and extent of forgiveness, as exercised by us; and our obligation to perform this duty; and when this may be said to be an evidence of our obtaining forgiveness from God.

*First*, Concerning the nature and extent of forgiveness, as exercised by us; for the understanding of which, let it be premised,

[1.] That the injuries that are done us, are to be considered either as they contain an invasion upon, or denying us those rights which belong to us, agreeably to that station and condition in life, in which the providence of God has fixed us; these must be reckoned injuries, because they are detrimental to us, and acts of injustice; or, they may be farther considered, as crimes committed against God, inasmuch as they infer a violation of the law of nature, which is instamped with his authority; whereby the rights of every particular person are determined, and to deprive us of them, is a sin against God, in the same sense in which sins immediately committed against men, are said to be committed against him. And by this we may be farther led to consider;

[2.] That injuries are only to be forgiven by us, as they are against ourselves; whereas God alone can forgive them as they are against him; and the reason hereof is, because no one can dispense with that punishment which is due for the violation of a law, but the supreme authority. The precept that is to be obeyed, and the sanction that binds over the offender to suffer for his violation of it, must be established by the highest authority. And therefore, inasmuch as the creature cannot demand that obedience which is due to God alone; for the same reason he cannot remit that debt of punishment which belongs only to God to inflict. However, we are to desire, that God would pardon, rather than punish those that have injured us: And this is the only sense in which we may be said to forgive others those crimes that are committed against God, if this may be called forgiveness. But, so far as any injury respects ourselves, as being detrimental to us, it is our duty to forgive it, and not to exercise that private revenge which is inconsistent with the subject-matter of this petition.

[3.] So far as an injury, which more especially respects ourselves, contains in it a violation of human laws, whereby the offender has rendered himself obnoxious to a capital punishment; it does not belong to us, as private persons, to forgive the criminal, so as to obstruct the course of justice, since this is a matter that does not concern us, as not having the executive part of human laws in our power; and, to pretend to this,

would be not only to violate the laws of men, but to commit an offence against God, who has established the just rights of civil government; therefore, that forgiveness which we are obliged to exercise towards others, does not extend itself to this matter. Nor are we obliged, when we forgive those that have injured us, to be unconcerned about doing justice to ourselves, when it is possible, or at least easy, for us to have redress in the course of law or equity; especially if the damage we sustain hereby, be, in a very great degree, prejudicial to ourselves or families. And if it affects our good name in the world, the forgiving those reproaches that are cast upon us, is not inconsistent with our using endeavours to vindicate our own reputation; though it may be, this can hardly be done without exposing him that has done us the injury, to suffer that shame which he brought on himself thereby.

These things being premised, we proceed to consider, the nature and extent of forgiveness, as it is to be exercised by us, so far as the injury committed respects ourselves. This is opposed to our bearing the least degree of malice against the offender, or carrying our resentments too far, by magnifying lesser injuries, and meditating revenge: Nor ought we to be so partial in our own cause, as to deny, or altogether overlook those things that are, in other respects commendable in him, as though a crime committed against us, were altogether inconsistent with the least degree of virtue or goodness in him that has committed it. If he has done injustice to us, this does not excuse any act of injustice to his person or character in other instances, which have not an immediate relation to ourselves; which is to see things through a false medium, or to infer consequences that cannot fairly be deduced from any thing that he has done, how injurious soever it may have been to us.

Moreover, we are not to take occasion from the ill treatment we have met with, from any one, to endeavour to ruin him, as to his estate or character in the world; since that is not a proper expedient, either to do justice to ourselves, or bring him, who has done us the injury to repentance.

Here we may take occasion to enquire, how far a person that is injured by another, may demand satisfaction? and, whether it is our duty to forgive him, though it be neither in his power nor inclination to make it?

The answer that I would give to this, is; that the law of God and nature, does not prohibit us from demanding satisfaction in proportion to the injury received; since this is a debt we ought to claim, in justice to ourselves, and our character in the world: Nevertheless, it must be considered,



1st, That it may sometimes be out of his power to make full satisfaction; in which case we must be content, and forgive the injury without it; and we are to deal with him in like manner, as we are obliged to do with those who are insolvent in pecuniary debts. But,

2dly, We suppose, that the person who has injured us, is able in some measure, to make satisfaction; but he is so far from being willing to do it, that he refuses to acknowledge his crime, and, which is still worse, seems inclined, as occasion may offer, to commit it again, which is the worst of tempers, especially if the injury be not barely supposed, but real: Yet this is no rule for us to proceed by, in forgiving injuries; for the understanding of which let it be considered, that satisfaction for injuries committed, consists either in making a compensation in proportion to the damage sustained thereby, or else in a bare acknowledgment of the fault committed. The former of these we may, in justice, insist on; but yet, in most cases, where the injury only respects ourselves, it may be dispensed with, or demanded at pleasure; but whether it be given or no, it is so far our duty to pass it by, as not to bear the least degree of malice against him, that has injured us, though he refuses to give it. As to the latter, where no more is demanded, than a bare acknowledgment of the offence committed, which cannot be supposed to be out of the power of the offender to do; but he is resolved that he will not make this small satisfaction, as persisting in his own vindication, and determines to do the same again, as occasion offers: we are to let him know, that herein he not only sins against us, but God, and to exhort him to confess his crime before him; and therefore we pity his obstinacy, while we express our readiness to pass by the injury he has done us: However, such an one is not to be chosen by us as an intimate friend or associate, out of a principle of self-preservation, that he may not be in a capacity of doing us the same injuries for the future, which his obstinacy discovers him to be inclined to do. Thus concerning the nature and extent of this duty of forgiving injuries: We proceed to consider,

Secondly, The indispensable obligation we are under to perform it; otherwise we could not make this appeal to God in prayer, or take encouragement to hope, that we shall obtain forgiveness from him. To induce us hereunto, let us consider,

1st, That if God should deal with us as we do with our fellow-creatures, when we refuse to forgive them, we should be for ever miserable. This our Saviour illustrates by the parable of the debtor and creditor, in Matt. xviii. 24, & seq. where a person is represented as *owing ten thousand talents*, and his

*lord*, upon his entreaty, *forgave him the debt*; and afterwards he dealt severely with one that owed him but an *hundred pence*, and thereby provoked his lord to *deliver him to the tormentors*, till he should pay all that was due unto him; which parable, though it does not argue the least mutability in the divine purpose relating hereunto, yet we may infer from hence, how inconsiderable the injuries that are done us are, if compared with those which we have done against God; and how little ground we have to expect forgiveness from him, if we are not disposed to forgive others.

*2dly*, An implacable spirit, meditating revenge for injuries done against us, will render us altogether unfit for the performance of an holy duty, and particularly this of imploring forgiveness from God: It also exposes us to many temptations; accordingly the apostle speaks of anger retained in our breasts, or *letting the sun go down upon our wrath*, as that which gives place to the Devil, Eph. iv. 26, 27.

*3dly*, Malice and fury tend to exasperate an enemy; whereas, forgiveness melts him into friendship, and very much recommends the gospel, which obliges us to shew such instances of brotherly kindness, even where they are least deserved.

*4thly*, We have many bright examples for our imitation, of the best of men, who have been highly injured, and yet have expressed a forgiving spirit. Thus Joseph forgave the injuries done against him by his brethren, when, after his father's death, they were jealous that he would hate them, and requite them all the evil that they had done unto him; but he not only comforted and spake kindly to them, but made very liberal provision for the subsisting of them and their families, Gen. l. 15—21. And, Moses, when Miriam was smitten with leprosy, for speaking against him, prays for her recovery, Numb. xii. 13. And, when the Syrian host was sent on purpose to destroy the prophet Elisha, and God had delivered them into his hand, being in the midst of Samaria, and the king of Israel was ready to smite them, had he desired it; but this he was so far from doing, that he says, *Thou shalt not smite them: Wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword, and with thy bow, set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master*, 2 Kings vi. 22.

And, in the New Testament, we have an instance of a forgiving spirit in Stephen, when, in the very agonies of death, having been before insulted, and now stoned by his enraged enemies; it is said, *He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*, Acts vii. 60. But the highest instance that can be given of the exercise of this grace we have in our Saviour, who prayed for them that cruci-

fied him; *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*, Luke xxiii. 34. These examples are worthy of our imitation; and therefore we should reckon ourselves obliged to forgive those who have injured us.

*Object.* It will be objected by some, that the injuries done them, are so very great, that they are not to be borne; and it would be dishonourable for them not to take any notice thereof: Or, it may be, the ingratitude that is expressed herein, is such that it deserves the highest resentment; and if it should be passed over, it might be reckoned a tacit approbation of their crime, and give occasion to them, that have committed the injury against them, to despise them, and do the like for the future.

*Ans.* To this it may be replied;

1st, That if the injury be great, it will be much more commendable, and a greater instance of virtue and grace to forgive than to resent it; for in this a man overcomes himself, subdues his own passions, and thereby lets his enemy know, that he has a due sense of the divine command relating thereunto, and that his spirit is sanctified and calmed by the power of divine grace. This is reckoned one of the greatest victories; as it is said, *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city*, Prov. xvi. 32.

2dly, As for our honour, which is pretended to be concerned herein, they who allege it, are very much mistaken in their sentiments about true honour; since it is said, *The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over his transgression*, chap. xix. 11.

3dly, This does not, in the least, argue, that the person who forgives, approves of his crime, who has done him the injury, since this is not inconsistent with our charging it on his conscience, and endeavouring to bring him under a sense of guilt, as having not only injured us, but done that which is highly displeasing to God; and he may be given to understand, that hereby he has wronged his own soul more than us, and therefore has great reason to be humbled before God, and repent of his sin committed against us, which, as it is committed against God, he only can forgive; though we let him know, that we are disposed to forgive him, so far as the crime is directed against us.

4thly, As to the pretence, that forgiving injuries will make those who have done them grow bold, and be more hardened in their crimes; and that they will hereby take occasion to insult, and do the like injuries for the future: It may be replied, that this very seldom happens; but if it should, we must consider that the ungrateful abuse of a kind and generous ac-

tion, or the possibility of this consequence ensuing thereupon, is no sufficient excuse for our not performing it. But if there be the least ingenuity of temper, or if it pleases God, by his grace, to succeed our kind behaviour toward them for their good, it will have a far different effect; as it is observed, *A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger*, chap. xv. 1. Thus concerning the obligation we are under to forgive the injuries that are committed against us: We are now to consider,

*Thirdly*, How this is an evidence, or may afford us ground of hope, that we shall obtain forgiveness from God, when we are praying for it. Here let it be observed, that forgiving injuries, may be considered barely as a virtue, proceeding from a goodness of temper, or the sense that persons have of the equity and reasonableness thereof, and from other motives which the light of nature may suggest, or, as it is recommended by Seneca, Epictetus, and other heathen moralists: And, indeed, it must be reckoned a very commendable quality, and a convincing evidence that a person is, in a great degree, master of his own passions; but we cannot from hence conclude, that such an one is in a state of grace; and nothing short of that can be evidence of our right to forgiveness: Therefore we must consider this disposition to forgive injuries, as a Christian virtue, or as containing in it some ingredients, that manifest it to be a grace wrought in us by the Spirit, and a branch of sanctification, and, as such, having several other graces connected with; and accordingly,

1. When our forgiving injuries is an evidence of our having obtained forgiveness, we must do it out of a humble sense of the many crimes that we have committed against God; and therefore it is joined with, and flows from the grace of repentance.

2. It also contains in it several acts of faith; as hereby we do, in effect, acknowledge, that all we have is in God's hand, who has a right to take it away when he pleases; and if he suffers us to be deprived of our reputation and usefulness in the world, or our wealth and outward estate therein, by the injurious treatment we meet with from those, who, without cause are our enemies; we are sensible that this could not be done without his permissive providence, which we entirely acquiesce in. The injury or injustice we wholly lay to the charge of those who hate us, nevertheless, in obedience to our Saviour's command, we desire to express our love to them, in the most valuable instances thereof, and, at the same time, to acknowledge and bow down to the sovereignty and justice of God, in suffering us to be thus dealt with by men, hoping and trusting that he will over-rule this, and all other afflictive pro-

vidences for our good; as David says, when he speaks of God's suffering Shimei to curse him: *It may be, that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day*, 2 Sam. xvi. 12.

3. When we forgive those that have injured us, it is, with an earnest desire that God would give them repentance, that thereby his name may be glorified, and his interest promoted, whatever becomes of our name and usefulness in the world.—When we are enabled to exercise such a frame of spirit as this in forgiving those that have injured us, we have ground to hope, that when we pray for forgiveness, the great God, who is the author of all that grace which we exercise in forgiving others, will grant us this invaluable privilege.

Having explained this petition, we shall now consider it as a directory, that so we may put up our requests to God, agreeable thereunto: Accordingly we are to cast ourselves before his footstool, with humble confession of sin, and imploring forgiveness from him, to this purpose: “We adore thee, O Lord, “as a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Thou hast “commanded us to keep thy precepts, and hast revealed thy “wrath from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteous- “ness of men: We acknowledge that we are, by our trans- “gressions, become debtors to thy justice; our iniquities are “increased over our head, and our trespasses grown up unto “the heavens; and thereby we have deserved to be banished “out of thy sight, and cast into the prison of hell, without hope “of being released from thence. We are not able to stand in “judgment, and therefore we dread the thoughts of appearing “before thine awful tribunal, as an absolute God. If thou “shouldest contend with us, we cannot answer for the least sin “that we have committed; and it would be an injury to thy “justice, and an increasing of our guilt, to expect or desire, “that thou shouldest pardon our sins without receiving satis- “faction for them, which we are sensible that we are not, nor “ever shall be able to give thee. But we bless thy name, that “thou hast sent thy well-beloved Son into the world, who gave “his life a ransom for thy people; by which means thy justice “is satisfied, thy law fulfilled, and all thy perfections infinitely “glorified: He hath finished transgression, made an end of “sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in ever- “lasting righteousness; which is to and upon all them that “believe. Thou hast therefore given us leave, and encouraged “us to come to thee by faith, to plead with thee for redemp- “tion and forgiveness through his blood, according to the “riches of thy grace. In him thou art a God, pardoning the “iniquity, and passing by the transgressions of the remnant of “thine heritage: Therefore we pray for this invaluable privi-

“lege as those who humbly hope and trust that we have those  
 “graces wrought in us, which are an evidence of our having  
 “Christ’s righteousness imputed to us, for which we bless  
 “thee; and, in particular, that thou hast enabled us to forgive  
 “all the injuries that are done us by our fellow creatures;  
 “which are very small and inconsiderable, if compared with  
 “those affronts which we daily offer to thy Majesty. We be-  
 “seech thee, grant that this, and all other graces, may more  
 “and more abound in us, that thereby our evidences of an  
 “interest in Christ’s righteousness may be more strong and  
 “clear; that though we daily contract guilt by our transgres-  
 “sions, we may be enabled to conclude for our comfort, that  
 “there is no condemnation to us, and that iniquity shall not  
 “be our ruin.”

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**QUEST. CXCV.** *What do we pray for in the sixth petition?*

**ANSW.** In the sixth petition, [which is, *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,*] acknowledging that the most wise, righteous, and gracious God, for divers holy and just ends, may so order things, that we may be assaulted, foiled, and for a time, led captive by temptations, that Satan, the world, and the flesh, are ready, powerfully to draw us aside and ensnare us; and that we, even after the pardon of our sins, by reason of our corruption, weakness, and want of watchfulness, are not only subject to be tempted, and forward to expose ourselves unto temptations; but also, of ourselves, unable and unwilling to resist them, to recover out of them, and to improve them, and worthy to be left under the power of them; we pray, that God would so overrule the world, and all in it; subdue the flesh, and restrain Satan; order all things, bestow and bless all means of grace, and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we, and all his people may, by his providence, be kept from being tempted to sin; or, if tempted, that, by his Spirit, we may be powerfully supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation, or, when fallen, raised again and recovered out of it, and have a sanctified use and improvement thereof; that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected, Satan trodden under our feet, and we fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil for ever.

**O**UR Saviour having, in the foregoing petition, exhorted us to pray for forgiveness of sins, whereby the guilt of past crimes may be removed; in this he advises us to pray against temptation, lest being overcome thereby, we should



contract fresh guilt, and walk unbecoming those who hope for, or have obtained forgiveness from God.. In order to our understanding of which it will be necessary for us to premise something tending to explain the meaning of the word *Temptation*. Accordingly it may be taken in a good sense: Thus God himself is sometimes said to *tempt*, or rather, which is all one, to *try* his people. This he does by the various dispensations of his providence, whether prosperous or adverse. And sometimes by his commands, when he puts us upon the performance of difficult duties, that he might prove us, whether his fear is before us: In this respect he is said to have tempted Abraham, proved his faith, and discovered his readiness to obey his command in offering Isaac; and, after he had tried his faith, he commends him, when he says, *Now I know that thou lovest God*, Gen. xxii. 1, 12. And sometimes he is said to tempt, or *allure*, to what is good, Hos. ii. 14. to invite his people to do those things which redound to his glory and their real interest; and in this sense we may and ought to tempt others, to persuade, and, as much as in us lies, engage their affections to the performance of what is good: Thus the apostle advises us to *consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works*, Heb. x. 24.

We are not to understand the word *temptation* in these senses in this petition; but it is to be taken for our being tempted to sin, in which respect God never tempts any one: Thus the apostle says, *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man*, James i. 13. neither ought we to tempt one another thereunto. This being premised, we come more immediately to explain this petition: In which we shall consider some things which are supposed; and also the subject-matter thereof.

I. There are several things supposed, when we are taught to pray, *Lead us not into temptation*. As,

1. That man, in this imperfect state, is very much exposed to temptations. The world is always ready to present its alluring objects, which are suited to the corruption of our nature, and therefore too easily complied with: And this is farther promoted by Satan's suggestions, who is daily endeavouring to entangle us in the snare that is laid for us.

2. As we are daily tempted to sin, so we are in great danger of being overcome thereby; which arises not only from the methods used to draw us aside from God, and the many secret snares laid for us, that are not easily discerned, but principally from the treachery of our own hearts, which are deceitful above all things, and very apt to incline us to commit those sins which bring a great deal of guilt with them. It also pro-

ceeds sometimes from a want of watchfulness; whereby the enemy comes upon us undiscovered, and we are overcome before we are aware of it; the temptation offers itself, and we are unable, but willing, to resist it. And, if fallen by it, this tends still more to weaken us, so that we cannot recover ourselves from the pit into which we are plunged; we also find it very difficult, if God is pleased, at any time, to suffer us to fall by temptations, to improve them aright to his glory and our own good.

3. It is farther supposed, that God may suffer his people, though their sins are pardoned, and their souls sanctified, to be tempted, and sometimes even foiled and led captive for a time; which may give us occasion to consider,

(1.) In what sense he may be said to tempt, or lead his people into temptation. This he does, though without being the author of sin, (*a*)

(*a*) In our day and country there are some worthy men, who without fear, or scruple, affirm, that God is the *author*, and *cause* of sin; which words they soften to avoid the blasphemy, which they contain. We have in a note, I. vol. p. 530. given the sentiments of the late Dr. Williams, on the origination of sin. Being a proficient in the study of the human mind, he has philosophized a little on, but not essentially differed from the representation of the subject, as it is found in the writings of sound protestant divines. As some American writers advocate with considerable address, such divine causality, and publicly affirm it to have been taught by Luther, Calvin, &c. and to have found its place in our standards in the words—"foreordained whatsoever comes to pass," it is proper to resort to the *ipseissima verba* of some of the European protestant theologians, as a test of such allegations.

The Westminster divines, no doubt, entertained the same views of sin, which will be found in the following extracts. In their definition of sin, they not obscurely shew, that they did consider it not more a *transgression of*, than a *want of conformity unto, the law*. The former is the translation of *ἀνomia* in I. John iii. 4. which is rather *privatio*, *defectus*, or *declinatio* than *transgressio legis*. Also the Greek word *ἀμαρτία*, and the Hebrew *חַטָּאת* signify *non consecutio scopi*. If they viewed sin as a *qualitas adventitia*, a *quiddam non positivum*, a *simplex privatio*, a *quiddam actioni inherens*, they could not have viewed it the proper subject of a decree or purpose, but only as foreseen and permitted.

The following quotations are given in the authors' own words, for the satisfaction of those who may not possess the works from which they are taken.

"*Natura peccato corrupta est.—Aversio quædam voluntatis secuta est, ut homo nihil eorum velit aut faciat, quæ Deus vult et præcipit. Item quod nescimus, quid Deus, quid gratia, quid justitia, denique quid ipsum peccatum sit. Hi sunt profecto horribiles defectus, quos, qui non intelligunt; nec vident, talpa cœciores sunt.*" Mart. Lutheri Loc. Com. p. 23.

"*Hæc Regula certa et vera est; Deum esse natura bonum, ideo nihil a Deo proficisci, nisi quod bonum est, mors autem est mala, peccatum etiam est malum, &c. Non igitur a Deo proficiscuntur mala hæc, &c. Peccati porro quæ causa sit, si roges, sacræ literæ ostendunt, id ex Sathana esse, cui contra verbum Dei assenserunt nostri parentes, a Deo inobedientes facti, incurrerunt in horribiles penas. Nam per peccatum illud non solum corpora nostra sic infirmata sunt, ut ex immortalibus mortalia fierent, sed etiam mens depravata est. Amisit enim homo veram Dei notitiam, et voluntas quoque tum admodum est depravata, ut nihil quam malum appetat.*" Mart. Lutheri Loc. Com. p. 22.

[1.] Objectively ; when his providential dispensations, which, in themselves, are holy, just, and good, offer occasions of sin ;

“Eant nunc qui Deum suis vitiis inscribere audent, quia dicimus naturaliter vitiosos esse homines. Opus Dei perperam in sua pollutione scrutantur, quod in integra adhuc et incorrupta Adæ natura requirere debuerant. A carnis ergo nostræ culpa, non a Deo nostra perditio est, quando non alia ratione perimus, nisi quia degeneravimus a prima nostra conditione.”—“Dicimus ergo naturali hominem vitiositate corruptum, sed quæ a natura non fluxerit. A natura fluxisse negamus, ut significemus adventitiam magis esse qualitatem quæ homini acciderit, quam substantialem proprietatem quæ ab initio indita fuerit. Vocamus tamen naturalem, nequis ab unoquoque prava consuetudine comparari putet, quum hæreditario jure universos comprehensos teneat.” *Calvini Institut. lib. II. cap. 1. sect. 10, 11.*

“Sed cum nihil contingat in mundo, aut contingere possit sine justissima et sapientissima Dei providentia, annon, peccati author et causa dici potest? Absit, quippe qui illud orit, vetat, & punit, ut quod cum summâ ipsius bonitate pugnet.” *Bucani Theolog. p. 165.*

“Deus non infundit malitiam in volentates malorum, sicut infundit bonitatem in corda piorum, nec impellit aut allicit voluntates ad peccandum ; sed tantum malas voluntates, seu peccantes, quales invenit ex corruptione quæ sequuta est aversionem diabolorum et hominum a Deo, movet, ciet, flectit, inclinat, dirigit, sapienter, juste, potenter, ubi, quando, quomodo, et quousque vult, sive mediate, sive immediate, ad objecta vel persequenda, vel fugienda, ut impleant (quibus tale nihil propositum est) quod manus et consilium Domini decrevit. *Bucani Theol. p. 153.*

“Estne peccatum originis Substantia an accidens?—Non est substantia; esset enim anima vel corpus. Jam vero corpus et anima quoad substantiam, sunt bonæ Dei creaturæ, quæ etiamnum creantur a Deo. Ergo non sunt peccatum. Nec substantialis est proprietas, aut aliquid substantiale in homine: sed est adventitia qualitas, quæ tamen naturalis dicitur, non quod à natura fluxerit (quatenus creata est) sed quia hæreditario jure ut dicitur, suos comprehensos tenet, et in ipsa hominis natura, viribus, et facultatibus naturalibus inhæret, et ipsi homini innata est.” *Bucani Theol. p. 174.*

“Est-ne peccatum aliquid Positivum an Privativum?—Peccatum non est positivum, id est, quiddam subsistens a Deo conditum, nec est simpliciter et pura privatio, sicut mors est privatio vitæ, aut tenebræ sunt privatio lucis ; sed est defectus seu destructio rei positivæ, videlicet operis et ordinis divini in subjecto, quod culpam sustinet suæ depravationis, aversionis a Deo, ut ruina in domo, cæcitas et amissio visus in oculis.” *Bucani Theol. p. 167.*

“Permissio est gubernatio Dei, quâ homines vel diabolos, ad peccandum pronos, a peccato non retrahit, sed gratiæ suæ auxilio negato vel subtracto, in peccata ruere sinit, ita tamen ut ipsorum impetum ad judiciorum suorum executionem flectat, et quæ pessimo ab ipsis concilio suscipiuntur, in fines optimos dirigat.”

#### EXPLICATIO.

1. Deus in permissione mali culpæ seu peccati, non est otiosus spectator, sed potens, justus, et sapiens judex : Itaque.

(1.) Efficax gratiæ suæ auxilium, sine quo non possunt non peccare in peccatis mortui homines, negat vel subtrahit.

(2.) Homines vel diabolos ad peccandum natura et consuetudine pronos, sæpissimè a peccatis non retrahit, quos tamen facillimè posset retrahere : sed in peccata ruere sinit.

(3.) Peccatum animis ipsorum susceptum, seu peccandi impetum ita moderatur, ut non in quævis objecta eum ferri patiat, sed flectat et dirigat ad ejus modi objecta, vel homines, quos punire, castigare, vel explorare vult.

(4.) Quæ ab impiis hominibus, vel diabolis, malo fine, perpetrantur, in fines optimos dirigat.

which, nevertheless, would not ensue hereupon, did not our corrupt nature lay nold on them as such, and abuse them: Thus all God's works of providence or grace, may prove temptations to men; as the Psalmist, speaking of the *prosperity of the wicked*, intimates, that it raised his enyy, Psal. lxxiii. 3. and elsewhere he considers the blessings of common providence as proving a temptation, to carnal security and indifference in religion, to some of whom it is said, *Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God*, Psal. lv. 19. and, on the other hand, afflictive providence sometimes prove temptations to us to murmur and entertain hard thoughts of God.—Moreover, his threatenings are oftentimes abused, and some

## EXEMPLI GRATIA.

Si viator aliquis a latrone in via occidatur, homicidium permississe Deus dicitur:

(1.) Quia efficax gratiæ suæ auxilium ei subtraxit vel negavit, sine quo infal-libiliter homicidium erat perpetraturus.

(2.) Quia animum latronis, naturâ vel consuetudine ad homicidia pronum, ab homicidio non retraxit; quem tamen facillimè potuisset retrahere: sed in hoc facinus ipsum ruere permisit.

(3.) Quia concilium homicidii perpetrandi, ipsumque latronis impetum ita rexit et flexit, ut non quemvis promiscue hominem voluerit aut potuerit interficere: sed hunc potius, quam alium interfecerit; Unde furori latronis hunc potius viatorem, quam alium hominem objecit: justo quodam judicio: cujus ratio plerumque homines latet.

(4.) Quia, quod malo fine a latrone est perpetratum; forte ad pecuniam acquirendam, quam nequiter dilapidaret, in finem bonam direxit: quia est pœna vel ipsius latronis, vel ejus, qui a latrone est occisus: vel alius etiam finis nobis ignotus.

II. Sunt igitur in peccatis hominum, circa quæ divina occupatur permissio, quatuor imprimis observanda et distinguenda:

(1.) Actio per se, quatenus est actio.

(2.) Vitium actioni inhærens.

(3.) Directio organi mali et actionis vitiosæ in objectum certum.

(4.) Finis directionis, e quo accidit peccato judicii divini ratio; ut per hominum peccata Deus exequatur justa sua judicia: Primum, tertium, et quartum a Deo est, Deumque authorem habet. Est enim omnis actio, quatenus est actio, bona: directio actionis et ipsa bona: denique finis directionis optimus, nempe divini judicii executio. Secundum, in quo peccati consistit ratio, non a Deo, sed a solo est homine: adeoque solus homo peccati, quatenus est peccatum author est." *Wendel. Theol. p. 179.*

"Hinc firmiter concludimus, cum permissione Dei concurrere quoque efficacem Dei actionem et directionem vitiosi instrumenti in objectum certum, adversus quod judicium suum exercere Deo visum."

"Orthodoxi nominis osor et insignis caluminator Graverus ad art. 19. Confess. Aug. p. 112, et sequentibus, portentosum dogma, de Deo peccati authore, Ecclesiis nostris non tantum calumniose impingit, sed et 15 argumenta nostris affingit quibus thesīm hanc suam: Deus est peccati, quatenus peccatum est, author: probet: imprimis autem ad infame hoc et blasphemum dogma probandum affirmat, a nostris adduci scripturæ loca, quæ modo allegata sunt. Nos vero ut tam effrontibus calumniatoribus; ita omnibus, qui blasphemum istud dogma vel probant; vel profitentur, et defendunt, anathema dicimus, et innocentiz nostræ vindicem mundi judicem, jamjam ad judicium se accingentem, imploramus." *Wendel. Theol. p. 183.*

thereby tempted to think him severe and unmerciful; others complain of his commandments as grievous, because he does not give them those indulgencies to sin which their corrupt natures desire. In these respects God may be said to lead into temptation; nevertheless, we are not to pray, that he would alter the methods of his providence, or make abatements as to the duties which he commands us to perform; but rather, that he would not suffer us to make a wrong use of them.

[2.] God leads into temptation permissively, when he does not restrain the tempter, which he is not obliged to do, but suffers us to be assaulted by him, and, at the same time, denies the aids and assistance of his grace, to prevent our compliance therewith; so that when we pray that he would *not lead us into temptation*, we desire that he would prevent the assault, or fortify us against it, that, through the weakness of our grace, or the prevalency of corruption, we may not comply with the temptation.

(2.) We shall now consider the reason why God thus leads his people into temptation, or suffers them to be tempted: or what are those holy, wise, just, and gracious ends, which he designs thereby; and,

[1.] It cannot be expected that it should be otherwise, when we chuse to go in the way of temptation, or indulge those corruptions, whereby we are inclined to yield to it: In this case, God's judicial hand appears, as he punishes for one sin, by suffering us to be tempted to another.

[2.] God hereby gives us occasion to see our own weakness, and the deceitfulness of our hearts, and the need we have of his grace, to prevent our falling by temptation: Thus it is said, that God *left Hezekiah*, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. compared with 2 Kings xx. 15. when he sinned in shewing the ambassadors of the king of Babylon the treasures that he had in his house, in which this good king discovered too much pride; whereas it had been better had he shewn them the bed he lay on, when he was nigh unto death, and taken occasion from thence, to give God the glory of his miraculous recovery which was the reason of their being sent to compliment him upon it: In this respect *God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.*

[3.] God does this, that, when we experience the superior force of our spiritual enemies, we may, by faith and prayer, have recourse to his almighty power and grace. Thus when the apostle Paul was in danger of being *exalted above measure*, through Satan's temptations, he says, *For this I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me*, 2 Cor. xii. 8.

[4.] He suffers this, that we may herein have an instance of the imperfections of this present state, and be induced to press

after, and long for, that state of perfect freedom, not only from sin, but temptation, which is reserved for us in heaven.

[5.] We are led into temptation, that hereby we may see the necessity of making use of the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand our ground. As the soldier will not put on his armour but when he is going to engage the enemy; so God has ordained that our life should be a perpetual warfare, and that we should be continually exposed to the assaults of our spiritual enemies, that we may always be prepared for them, having *the girdle of truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*, Eph. vi. 14—17. He also suffers this, that we may, in the end, know what it is to conquer, and have the pleasure and satisfaction arising from hence, and that he may have the glory of this victory.

[6.] God suffers this, that he may cure our sloth, and excite us to greater watchfulness, as those who are never wholly out of danger: Thus the apostle says, *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. and our Saviour advises his disciples, *to watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation*, Matt. xxvi. 41.

[7.] God suffers us to be tempted, that we may know the depths of Satan, which we should otherwise be unapprized of; and that thereby we may be more prepared to make resistance, and, when we are enabled to overcome, may be better furnished to direct others, who are liable to like temptations, how they should behave themselves under them, and to encourage them to hope that they should be delivered, as we have been.

4. It is farther observed, that though God suffers his people to be tempted, and even foiled, and led captive, yet this is only for a time. In this the temptations of believers differ from those of the unregenerate, who are *taken captive by Satan at his will*, 2 Tim. ii. 26. Whereas it is said concerning the believer, that it is *only for a season*; and that, *if need be, he is in heaviness through manifold temptations*, 1 Tim. i. 6. This leads us to consider,

II. The subject-matter of the petition, when we pray that God would *not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. The only difficulty in laying down the method in which this is to be insisted on, arises from the indeterminateness of the word *evil*; of which, there are various senses given by them, that explain the Lord's prayer.

Some understand by it, the evil one, or the Devil; and then one part of this petition may be considered as exegetical of the other: So that, not to be led into temptation, is the same as, to be delivered from the assaults of Satan, the evil one, that



we may not be brought under his power, or become vassals to him, as complying with his temptations.

Others understand the word in a more large sense, as an intimation of our desire to be delivered from evil of all kinds; and that either from the evil of sin, or the evil of afflictions, which are the consequence of sin. If we take it for a deliverance from the evil of sin; this respects the guilt thereof, and the punishment that is due to it; and then it differs little or nothing from the subject-matter of the foregoing petition, when we pray, that God would *forgive us our sins*; or if, on the other hand, we take it for deliverance from the evil of sin, as it includes in it a branch of sanctification, that is, from the dominion and slavery of sin, then it is well connected with the former petition; for when we pray for pardon of sin, we ought also to pray for deliverance from the reigning power thereof. And it is very well connected with our praying against temptation; for it is, in effect, to desire either that we may not be assaulted by the tempter, or that we may not be drawn aside to sin against God thereby.

As for the evil of affliction, I cannot think that this is intended by this expression, because the opposition between it and our deliverance from temptation, would not appear to be so just as we must suppose it is, unless we take temptation itself to be an affliction; and then it is the same as though we should say, deliver us from temptation, that we may not be afflicted therewith; which we must be supposed to be, by reason of the danger we are in of falling thereby.

By passing by these critical remarks on the sense of the words, *Deliver us from evil*, we shall consider the subject-matter of this petition, under two general heads, *viz.*

*First*, We shall enquire what are the temptations which we are exposed to.

*Secondly*, How we are to pray that we may not be led into them; or, if we are, how we may be delivered from the evil consequences that will arise from our compliance with them, which is principally implied in those words, *Deliver us from evil*.

*First*, What are those temptations which we are exposed to: These are of various kinds, all which take their rise either from the world, the flesh, or the Devil. Their manner of acting, indeed, is different; yet they are very often united in their assaults, from whence we are in perpetual danger of being overcome, if God, by his grace, is not pleased to interpose.—And,

1. We shall consider the temptations that we meet with from the world. These are either such as arise from the solicitations of those whom we converse with therein, who, under

a pretence of friendship, persuade us to sin: Thus we read of some who *entice others to lay wait for blood*, and desire those whom they would ensnare into this crime, to *cast in their lot among them*, Prov. i. 10—14. but we are advised, not to consent to, or be confederate with them: Or else they arise from those things in the world which present themselves to us, and are temptations to sin, in an objective way, being not so much the cause as the occasion thereof; and, in many instances, the use thereof is lawful, while the abuse alone proves hurtful to us: This is what we shall principally confine ourselves to at present, and shew how the good and evil things of the world, or the various conditions in which we are, whether prosperous or adverse, prove temptations to us.

(1.) The good things of the world, or the various conditions in which we are, whether prosperous or adverse, prove temptations to us.

(2.) The good things of the world are sometimes a snare to us, or an occasion of sin, viz. the riches, honours and pleasures thereof: Thus our Saviour speaks, Matt. xiii. 22. of the *care of this world*, that is, either to gain or increase of it; and the apostle speaks of some who had *forsaken the right way, following the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness*, 2 Pet. ii. 15. or acted contrary to his conscience for gain; and Felix perverted justice to obtain a bribe, concerning whom it is said, *He hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him*, Acts xxiv. 16. And we read of others that *will be rich*, that is, who immoderately pursue the gain of the world, that hereby *fall into temptation, and a snare, and many hurtful lusts*, 1 Tim. vi. 9. And the honours of the world are a temptation to others; Thus our Saviour says, *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another*, John v. 44. And others are ensnared by the pleasures of the world, who are stiled *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*, 2 Tim. iii. 4.

And, indeed, we often find, that the necessary duties or enjoyments of life, such as eating, drinking, and recreation; and the various relations we stand in to others prove a temptation to us. Many things are so, as they are used unseasonably, immoderately, and without a due regard to the glory of God, which ought to be our highest end in all worldly enjoyments; and, indeed, whatever has a tendency to draw forth our corruption, may be said to be a temptation to us: Sometimes the prosperous condition of others has this effect upon us: Thus Cain, beholding Abel to have a more visible token of the divine regard to his person and offering than he had, hated and *slew him*, Gen. iv. 5, 9. And Joseph's being a favourite in his father's house, and honoured by God, in having

divine dreams, gave occasion to his brethren to envy him; who first designed to slay him, and afterwards, out of malice, sold him into Egypt. And when Joshua saw Eldad and Medad prophesying, supposing that this belonged only to Moses; and that it was a lessening of his honour, for them to pretend to this privilege, he desires that they might be *forbid*; but this was plainly a temptation; for Moses gives him a check, intimating that he did not well in *envying them for his sake*, Numb. xi. 29.

Moreover, we often find, that our own condition in the world, when we enjoy the outward blessings of providence, proves a temptation: Some are like the vessel that is in danger of being upset by having too much sail, and no ballast to keep it steady: In like manner, the abundance of this world, without the grace of God, to sanctify and set bounds to our affections, will oftentimes prove a snare to us. Some are hereby tempted to covetousness, than which, nothing is more preposterous; yet nothing more common. This seems to be supposed in the Psalmist's advice; *If riches increase, set not your heart upon them*, Psal. lxxii. 10. and it is an intimation, that our desires often increase with our substance, so that the more we have, the more we want, and are less disposed to contribute to the necessities of others: We have an instance of this in Nabal, whose answer to the obliging message, sent by David to him, *Say ye to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy servants, and to thy son David*, 1 Sam. xxv. 6, 8, 11. argued him to be of a churlish disposition, and that his prosperous circumstances in the world were a temptation to his corruptions, having no sense of gratitude for those favours that he had received from him and his men, while they resided in the wilderness, and were conversant with those that kept his flocks there. It would have been a more plausible excuse, had he alleged the danger that might accrue to him thereby: or, that it was possible that Saul might hear of it, and deal with him as he had done with Abimelech, and the other priests, at Nob, for that small respect that he had shewed him: But this he takes no notice of, but treats him morosely, when he says *Shall I take my bread and my water, and my flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be*. This manifested him to be a man of Belial, as Abigail confesses, when she says, *Nabal is his name, and folly is with him*, ver. 25.

Again, we sometimes find, that a prosperous condition in the world, is a temptation to God's people to presumption and carnal security; as the Psalmist says, *In my prosperity I said,*

*I shall never be moved*, Psal. xxx. 6. and the wicked are here by tempted to obstinacy and disobedience; as God says by the prophet, to the Israelites, *I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear; This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice*, Jer. xxii. 21. And sometimes to pride, haughtiness, and oppression; thus the Psalmist speaks of those who were *not in trouble, neither plagued like other men; therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain, violence covereth them as a garment*, Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6. We are not, indeed, to suppose, that this is the necessary result of a prosperous state in the world, since that temptation, which is only objective, may be fenced against: But the pernicious tendency thereof arises from the depravity of our nature, and its proneness to abuse the blessings of providence; from whence some take occasion to cast off fear, and put the evil day far from them: Therefore, when we pray, that the world may not prove a temptation to us, we desire, that God would keep us from using any indirect means, either to get or increase our worldly substance, but, on the other hand, enable us to improve it to his glory; and that our affections may not be so much set upon it as to alienate them from him; but that we may make it the matter of our deliberate choice, rather to be deprived of outward blessings, than receive them as our only portion, and, by having our hearts set too much upon them, forfeit, and be denied an interest in, his special and distinguishing love.

(2.) The evil things in the world often prove a temptation to us. By *evil things*, we mean afflictive providences, which are inseparable from this present state; since *man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards*, Job v. 7. These are either personal or relative; some more immediately from God, others from men, as instruments in his hand: Some arise from the present experience we have of affliction, others from our expectation or fear of future troubles: and all these sometimes prove temptations to us, unless God is pleased to interpose in a way of preventing grace, and make them conducive to our spiritual advantage. Now afflictions prove temptations to us,

[1.] When we are discontented and uneasy under the hand of God, complaining of the burdens that he is pleased to lay on us, as though they were insupportable, and it were impossible for us to bear up under them; or, when we are ready to conclude, that no affliction is like ours, and are apt to insinuate, that God hereby deals hardly with us.

[2.] When they disturb or disorder our thoughts, weaken our faith, and unfit us for spiritual meditations, or attending aright on ordinances of God; or when we are more concerned about our afflictions, than about sin, the cause of them.

[3.] When we have unbelieving apprehensions concerning the event thereof, concluding that they will certainly end in our ruin ; notwithstanding the promises, which God has made of their working together for good, to them that love him.— This temptation David was exposed to, when he said, *I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul*, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. which was an ungrounded fear, especially considering the promises that God had given him, and the many experiences he had of his being a help to him in the time of trouble.

[4.] Afflictions are temptations to us, when we take occasion from them to question God's fatherly love, or to conclude, that they are sent in wrath, and are intimations that we are cast off by him, when we have no reason to think so from any thing that there is in the nature of affliction itself ; also when we are hindered thereby, from applying those suitable promises which God has made to his people, in like cases, for their comfort and support.

Now when we pray that God would *not lead us into temptation*, as afflictive providences expose us to it, we are to pray against them with submission to the divine will, not as though the removal thereof were of equal importance, or as necessary to our happiness, as the taking away the guilt or power of sin : However, we are to pray, that afflictions may be sanctified to us ; and that corrupt nature may not take occasion from them, to have unbecoming thoughts of God ; but that we may hereby be led nearer to him, that so they may not prove a temptation to us, or at least, that with the temptation, he would make a way for our escape.

2. Another sort of temptations proceed from the flesh, which are the greatest and most dangerous of all. The apostle speaks of them as though they were the only temptations, when he says, *Every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed*, James i. 14. since all others might, without much difficulty, be resisted and overcome, were there not a corrupt disposition in our nature, which the apostle calls *lust*, that inclines us to adhere to, and comply with them. This consists in the irregularity and disorder of our passions ; which are not only prone to rebel against God, but to act contrary to the dictates of our own consciences, which is the result of our fallen state ; and the temptations are oftentimes various, according to the prevailing bias of our natural temper. A melancholy constitution sometimes inclines us to slavish fears, or distrust of God's providence ; or to have such black and dismal apprehensions of our spiritual concerns, that we are led to the very brink of despair. A choleric temper prompts us to revenge, injustice, and oppression, and puts us upon magnifying small offences, and expressing a furious resentment with-

out ground. A sanguine and airy constitution often proves a temptation to cast off all serious thoughts about God and another world, and to count religion a needless, melancholy and distasteful thing, and to make a jest of what is sacred, and ought to be treated with the utmost reverence; and this temper frequently exposes persons to the pernicious influence of bad company, and induces them to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Again, a stupid, plegmatic and heavy constitution, often proves a temptation to negligence in our civil and religious affairs, and not to make provision for a time of trial: Hereby persons are often tempted to neglect holy duties, especially such as are difficult; or to perform them in a careless manner, and so rest in a form of godliness, without the power thereof.

This difference of natural tempers is the reason why we behold lust appearing in different shapes; so that the same temptation that presents itself from without, suits the natural disposition of one who eagerly embraces it, while another is not greatly moved by it. This is what we understand by those temptations which arise from the flesh; and, when we pray against them, it is not to be supposed, that we expect to be perfectly freed from them in this world, in which, as has been elsewhere observed\*, there are the remnants of sin abiding in every part, even in them that are sanctified, and the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit. Therefore, when we pray against such-like temptations, we desire,

(1.) That God would restrain and prevent the irregularity and pernicious tendency of our natural temper, which inclines us to those sins which it is most prone to; or that he would keep us from those sins that more easily beset us, by reason of the propensity of our nature to commit them. And,

(2.) That he would sanctify our affections and bring them under the powerful influence of a principle of grace, which may maintain a perpetual opposition to those habits of sin that are daily leading us to turn aside from God, so that, whatever temptations we meet with from objects without us, our souls may be internally fortified against them, and disposed to hate and avoid every thing that is contrary to his holy law, or tends to his dishonour.

2. We shall now consider those temptations that arise from Satan, who is, for this reason, called *the tempter*, Matt. iv. 3. 1 Thess. vi. 3. and he is also said to *enter into*, Luke xxii. 3. and *fill the hearts* of sinners, Acts v. 3. As for the unregenerate, they are wholly under his power: Therefore conversion is called a *turning them from the power of Satan unto God*.

\* See Quest. LXXVII.



chap. xxvi. 18. There are, indeed, some who deny that Satan has any hand in those temptations, which we are exposed to; in which they are too much disposed to give into the error of the Sadducees of old. And if they do not expressly deny the existence of spirits, yet they will not allow that they have any thing to do in this world: And, indeed, they think it impossible for the Devil to give us any disturbance, seeing he is shut up in chains of darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day; and, inasmuch as we often read in scripture, of those things that he does against men in this world, they suppose that all these are to be understood in a metaphorical sense, and that nothing else is intended thereby, but the temptations we meet with from men, or from our own lusts: These, according to them, are the only devils that we need to fear.— This error they are led into under a pretence of avoiding the contrary extreme of those who seem to lay all the sins they commit, to the Devil's charge, rather than their own; when, probably, he has nothing to do with them, but they wholly proceed from their own corruptions: The middle way between these two extremes, is, as I conceive, much more consonant to scripture and experience, and rather to be acquiesced in. And therefore we shall endeavour to prove, that we are often tempted by Satan, as well as our own lusts; which will appear, if we consider the following propositions.

1st, It is not unreasonable to suppose, that spirits may so far have access to our souls, as *to suggest good or bad thoughts*; for, being reasonable creatures, it is beyond dispute, that they are able to converse with one another; and, if so, it contains no absurdity to suppose, that they may, some way or other, have conversation with the souls of men, which are capable of having things internally suggested to them, as well as receiving ideas from sensible objects, by means of our bodies, to which they are united. As to the manner *how this is done*, we pretend *not to determine it*, since it is sufficient to our present purpose, to make it appear that we are exposed to temptations from Satan, as well as our own selves.

2dly, It is *obvious from scripture*, that the Devil, and his angels, are *conversant in this lower world*: And accordingly he is styled, *The prince of the power of the air*, Eph. ii. 2. *the god of this world*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. And elsewhere he is said, *to walk about, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. And whereas it is objected, that this is inconsistent with his being shut up in hell: That may respect principally his state, as being unchangeably separated and banished from God's favourable and comfortable presence; nevertheless, he may suffer him to attempt many things against men in this world, for the trial of the graces of his people, and the punishing of his enemies.—

There is, indeed, a place of misery allotted for them, though they may not be, at present, confined to it; which seems to be implied in that request they made to our Saviour, that he would not command them to *go into the deep*, Luke viii. 31. by which, it is probable, the place of torment is intended, in which they expect to be for ever shut up after the day of judgment; and therefore they are represented elsewhere, as *crying out, Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* Matt. viii. 29.

*3dly*, Our first parent, in innocency, was tempted by the Devil, who made use of the serpent, by which he is said to *speak to Eve*, Gen. iii. 1. & seq. as has been proved elsewhere \*. And our Saviour was also tempted by him, when led by the Spirit into the wilderness for that purpose, Matt. iv. 1. but neither of these could be said to be tempted by the lusts of the flesh, as being inconsistent with that sinless state in which our first parents were before they fell, and our Saviour always was; and, it is certain, that the temptation offered to each of them, was not only objective; but there were words spoken, and a perverse method of reasoning made use of to ensnare them: And they could not be tempted by men, for, in this respect, they were alone; it therefore follows, that Satan was the tempter to each of them.

*4thly*, There are several other scriptures which expressly prove, that Satan has sometimes tempted persons to sin: Thus we read, that *he stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number them*, 1 Chron. xxi. 1. And elsewhere our Saviour tells the Jews, *Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*; that is, you eagerly commit those sins that he tempts you to. It is farther added, that he was *a murderer from the beginning*; which cannot be understood otherwise than of his murdering man, by tempting him to sin, and prevailing; and it is also said, that *he abode not in the truth, and is a liar, and the father of it*, John viii. 44. that is, he deceives us by his suggestions, and prevails on us, when complying therewith, to deceive ourselves.

This may give us occasion to enquire, how we may distinguish those temptations which take their rise from Satan; from others which proceed from ourselves. This is a very difficult question to be resolved, because our *corrupt nature, for the most part, tempts us to the same sins that Satan does*; therefore, where there are two causes of the same action, it is hard to distinguish one from the other: As when two candles are set up in the same room, we cannot distinguish the light of one from the light of the other. It is true, if the sins that we are tempted

\* See Vol. II. page 94.

to by our lusts, on the one hand, and by Satan on the other, had been described, as being of different kinds, we might more easily determine the difference that there is between them. Or if we had not the least inclination to comply with the temptation, and were able to say, as our Saviour did, *The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me*, chap. xiv. 30. then we might easily know where to fasten the charge of guilt; and it would be no injustice to exculpate ourselves, and lay the blame wholly on the Devil: But it is far otherwise with us, by reason of the *corruption of our nature*, which *would render us prone to sin, though Satan did not tempt us to it*. Therefore, since we often contract guilt by complying with his temptations, in like manner as he does by offering them; it is necessary that something be said, that we may know when the temptation is to be laid at our own door, and when at Satan's; so far as we are able to determine this matter: Therefore, let it be considered,

1st, *If we are tempted to those sins which we cannot think of but with the utmost abhorrence; and we are so far from entertaining any pleasure in the thing that we are tempted to, that we take occasion from hence, to express the greatest aversion to it, and would not comply with it for ten thousand worlds; when we count the suggestion an invasion on our souls, an affliction grievous to be borne; and, instead of compliance therewith, are led hereby to the exercise of those graces that are opposite to it: In such-like cases I humbly conceive, we do not incur guilt by being tempted; but the sin is wholly to be charged to Satan. Nevertheless,*

2dly, *When we are pleased with the temptation, but frequently meditate on the subject-matter thereof, and either commit the sin we are tempted to; or, if we abstain from the commission thereof, it is only out of fear or shame; and when the propensity of our nature leads us, at other times, to those sins which bear some resemblance to it; this argues, that our own lusts, as well as Satan, are joint causes of those sins that ensue hereupon. These things being considered, we shall proceed to speak more particularly concerning Satan's temptations; and, in order thereunto, lay down some things, by way of premisal, which relate to this matter, and then consider the method he takes in managing them.*

1. There are some things to be premised in general, concerning Satan's temptations;

(1.) That, though he may tempt to sin, yet he *cannot force the will*; for then the guilt would devolve wholly on himself and not on us. It would certainly render our condition very miserable, if it were impossible for us to resist his temptations; for this would be to suppose, that we lie at the mercy of him,

who has more power to destroy us than we have to withstand him. Besides this would be to extend the servitude of the will of man beyond its due bounds; for, though it be not free to what is spiritually or supernaturally good, we do not deny but that it is free, as it has a power to avoid many sins, which, upon this supposition, it would be inevitably hurried into. And it would be *a reflection on the providence of God*, so far to leave man in the hands of Satan, as that hereby he should be laid *under a necessity of sinning* and perishing without the choice and consent of his own will, and consequently, his destruction could not be said to be of himself.

(2.) Satan's power is not equal to his malice; for he is under divine restraints, and, indeed, *can do nothing against believers, but by God's permission*. This may be argued from our being obliged to desire that God would *keep us from being tempted*, that is, restrain the tempter, as well as enable us to resist him; and if it were otherwise, no one could be saved; for Satan's malice is boundless, though he be not suffered to do what it prompts him to. And this is a very great blessing to God's people; as it is a comfortable thing to consider, that they are in his hands, who is a merciful Father; and not in Satan's power, who breathes forth nothing but revenge and cruelty:

(3.) As it is *not a sin to be tempted*, since our Saviour is said to have been *in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*, Heb. iv. 15. so on the other hand, *when we are pleased*, and comply with the temptation, it will be *no sufficient excuse* for us to allege, that *Satan had a great hand in it*, since, as we have before observed, he can only tempt, but not force the will; and how formidable soever he may be, by reason of the greatness of his power and malice; yet we have this expedient to make use of, as it should put us upon saying, the Lord rebuke thee Satan.

(5.) There is a *vast difference between* the condition of those who are *converted*, and others, who are in an *unregenerate* state, as to the event and consequence of Satan's temptations. The former, indeed, by reason of the remainders of corruption in them, are *oftentimes foiled* and overcome thereby; but yet they shall *not be wholly destroyed*; but God will *find out a way for their recovery* out of the snare, in which they may, at any time, be entangled: Whereas the latter are wholly under his power, by *their own choice* and consent, and will remain so, till, by the grace of God they are delivered from the dominion of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. We shall now consider,

2. The method in which Satan manages his temptations, in order to his inducing men to sin. Sometimes he endeavours to ensnare and deceive us *by his subtilty*: upon which account he

is called *that old serpent, which deceiveth the whole world*, Rev. xx. 2. and xii. 9. And elsewhere we read of *the depths of Satan*, chap. ii. 24. that is, his deep-laid designs, and of his *wiles*, Eph. vi. 11. which it is an hard matter to withstand; and he is sometimes said to be *transformed into an angel of light*, 2 Cor. xi. 24. when he tempts to sin, under a pretence of our bringing glory to God, as well as good to ourselves and others. And there are other methods he takes, which, though managed with equal subtilty, yet he appears, *not as an angel of light*, pretending to help us in the way to heaven, but *as a roaring lion*, rendering himself formidable, and not concealing his design to devour, or make a prey of us, and to fill us with that distress of conscience, that brings us to the very brink of despair: These, as it is probable, the apostle intends by his *fiery darts*, as contra-distinguished from his *wiles*. In the former he shews himself a *tempter*, in the latter, an *accuser*. These are the usual methods which he takes in managing his temptations: and we shall consider them under four heads;

1. His endeavouring to produce and strengthen the habits of sin.

2. What he does to prevent conviction of sin, or to hinder the efficacy thereof.

3. His discouraging those who are under convictions from closing with Christ by faith. And,

4. His injecting blasphemous and atheistical thoughts into the minds of men, and using endeavours to drive them to despair.

1. Satan endeavours to *produce and strengthen the habits of sin*. These are generally attained by frequent acts, or by making a progress in sin, by which the heart is more hardened; and it is with greater difficulty that such are reclaimed from it; of them the prophet speaks, when he says, *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots; then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil*, Jer. xiii. 23. And in order thereunto, we may observe that he does not usually tempt, at first, to the vilest and most notorious acts of sin, especially where he has ground to suspect that these temptations will not be readily entertained or adhered to; this is the case of those who retain some impressions of a religious education, or are, at present, under the influence of restraining grace: these are first tempted to commit lesser sins before they proceed to greater. He generally begins with tempting to sins of *omission*, or to *formality* and *indifferency* in the performing of religious duties, or by pretending that God gives us some indulgencies or allowance to commit those sins that our natural constitution most inclines us to, and that we have been mistaken, when we have thought that religion is so difficult a

matter as some have pretended it to be; and that we may safely follow a multitude, though it be in doing that, which is in itself sinful; and that we are not to take an estimate of religion, from the apprehensions which some melancholy persons entertain of it; and that strictness in religion, is being righteous overmuch; or striving against the stream, is a needless precaution; and therefore we may consult our own honour and reputation in the world, and give into that scheme of religion that is uppermost; and that denying ourselves, taking up the cross and following Christ; though it may be reckoned a safe, yet it is not the only way to heaven. By this means the habits of sin are strengthened, the heart hardened therein, and persons proceed from one degree of impiety to another, till at last, they abandon themselves to every thing that is vile and profligate, and run with others, in all excess of riot. And, that his design may be more effectually carried on, herein he suits his temptations to every age and condition of life. Here we shall consider,

(1.) The method he takes with those who are in the prime and flower of their age: Accordingly these he endeavours to persuade, that it is *time enough for them to think of being religious hereafter*; and that it is too austere and melancholy a thing for them to pretend to it at present, as what is inconsistent with those pleasures and youthful lusts, which are agreeable to their age and condition of life. If they are children, then he suggests to them, that they have time enough before them; and when they are more advanced in years, they will have a greater degree of understanding, and be better able to take in the force of those arguments that are usually brought to induce persons to lead a religious life; and then they may make choice of it out of judgment. If they are servants, he persuades them, that they have other business on their hands, and that they had better stay till they are free from the engagements which they are, at present, under, to their masters; and, when they are at their own disposal, then it will be the fittest time for them to embrace the ways of God. This temptation carries in it the highest instance of presumption, tends greatly to harden the heart in sin, and has been the ruin of multitudes.

(2.) When persons are come to years of maturity, being no longer children or servants, but about to engage in those secular employments, which they are called to in the world, then he has temptations of another nature to offer to them. He has hitherto kept possession of their hearts, and desired them only to wait for this age of life, and then they would have a more convenient season to lead a religious life; but this convenient season is not yet come; for there are other stratagems which he now makes use of, to keep them in subjection to him.



Youthful lusts are now grown to a greater height, and the impressions of a religious education, if they were favoured with it, almost worn out ; and it is no difficult matter for him to persuade them, that the principal thing they are to be concerned about, is their living comfortably in the world ; and, that they have now an opportunity to increase their substance, and make provision for their future happiness therein ; therefore they ought to converse with those who are in the same station of life with themselves : And he generally points out such associates, which he tempts them to make choice of, that may be a snare to them, whose conversation is very remote from any thing that tends to promote religion and godliness. Sometimes he endeavours to make them ashamed of the ways of God, as though this were inconsistent with their reputation in the world, especially with their present situation or condition therein. And, on the other hand, if persons are poor and low in the world, and find it difficult to maintain themselves or families, then he persuades them that religion is not the business which they are called to engage in, but they must rather take pains to live ; that God does not require more than he gives, or expect, that they should spend a great deal of time in religious duties, who have none to spare from that business, which is necessary for their getting a livelihood in the world ; therefore this does not so much belong to them, as to others.

(3.) If persons are arrived to old age, the last stage of life, and have, as it were, their latter end in view, as not being far from it, according to the course of nature ; this is that age of life which was formerly pretended, by Satan, to be the most fit and proper season to entertain thoughts of religion in ; and it was in expectation hereof, that, when they were formerly under any convictions, the general method they took to stifle them, was by resolving, that they would apply themselves to a religious life in old age. By this means the tempter has hitherto beguiled them ; and now he has other temptations to present to them, which are suited to this age of life, whereby he insinuates, that the weakness and infirmities of old age render them unfit for religious duties. And, indeed, their hearts have contracted such a degree of hardness, by a long continuance in sin, that it is difficult for any thing to make an impression on them. However, Satan endeavours to persuade them, that, notwithstanding all the wickedness of their former life, and their present impenitency for it, they may hope for salvation from the mercy of God, though they continue still in a state of unregeneracy, which is an instance of soul-destructive presumption ; or else, he tempts them utterly to despair of the mercy of God, and tells them, that it is too late for them to begin that work which they have put off to the extremity of

life ; and by either of these methods he effectually brings about their ruin. Thus concerning Satan's suiting his temptations to the several ages and conditions of life.

But besides this, we may observe, that there are some methods which he takes, that are agreeable to the temper and disposition of those whom he assaults, that so he may not shoot his arrows at random, without answering the end he designs thereby ; in which his subtilty farther appears ; as,

[1.] He observes those proper times in tempting men to sin, wherein it is most likely that his temptations should take effect. Therefore his assaults are generally most violent, when they are least upon their guard, and give way to sloth and indolence ; or when the Spirit of God withdraws his influences, as the consequence whereof, their faith is weak, and they not able to make great resistance against his temptations, he crowds in a great multitude of them at once, and so lays hold on this opportunity to improve the success which he has gained against them. And if they are afraid of the consequences of a compliance therewith, he endeavours to stupify their souls, that they may have no present apprehensions of the evil that would ensue hereupon.

[2.] He often takes occasion to raise in our minds some doubts about the matter of sin or duty, whether, what he is about to tempt us to, be lawful or unlawful ; or how far a person may venture to go in the way of temptation, and yet maintain his integrity ? which is generally the first step towards the commission of those sins which we are tempted to.

[3.] If shame or fear are like to hinder the success of the temptation, he undertakes to find out some method of secrecy, whereby public scandal may be avoided. Thus Joseph's mistress tempted him to sin, when Potiphar was absent, and *there was none of the men of the house there within*, Gen. xxxix. 11. and therefore he had no occasion to fear that his crime would be detected. And sometimes he proceeds so far, as to insinuate, that they may even hide themselves from the all-seeing eye of God, and tempts them to say, *How doth God know ? Can he judge through the dark cloud ? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven*, Job xxii. 13, 14. Thus the prophet Isaiah denounces a woe against them that *seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us ? and who knoweth us*, Isa. xxix. 15. and this method seldom fails of answering his end, or prevailing against them, who are hereby induced to a sinful compliance with it.

[4.] If conscience be awakened, and deters them from adhering to the temptation, from a sense of that guilt which they will contract thereby ; Satan is sometimes content to take the

blame hereof upon himself, that they may think that they are to be excused, by reason of the violence of the temptation, which they could not well withstand.

[5.] Sometimes he persuades them to throw the blame on providence, as being the occasion of sin, or rendering it necessary or unavoidable from our condition or circumstances in the world, which is the highest injury that can be offered to the divine Majesty. Thus Adam tacitly reproaches God, when he says, *The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat*, Gen. iii. 12.

[6.] He often tempts men to presume on the mercy of God, hoping that though they continue in sin, they shall obtain a pardon from him. Or, since this is not to be expected without sincere repentance, he tempts them to presume, that by the influence of the Holy Spirit, they shall have this grace hereafter, whereby their perishing in their iniquities may be prevented. Thus concerning the methods which Satan takes to produce and strengthen the habits of sin. We proceed,

2. To consider how he endeavours to prevent our being brought under conviction of sin; or, if we are convinced thereof, to hinder its making any deep or lasting impression on us; and this he does various ways,

(1.) By dissuading others, who ought to deal faithfully with us, from reproof sin committed by us. Thus Ezekiel, speaking concerning the false prophets, says, that they *strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life*, Ezek. xiii. 22. Sometimes he improves the consideration of our circumstances in the world, to dissuade us from reproof sin in others, especially if they are our superiors, or those whom we are dependent on, or have some expectations from, lest we should make them our enemies, and thereby lose some advantages, which we hope to receive from them. And there are others whom he does not wholly dissuade from reproof of sin; but there are some circumstances attending the reproof, or the person that gives it, that he lays hold of, which hinders it from taking effect, whereby his end is no less answered than if sin had not been reproofed at all. As,

[1.] When we reprove those that are notorious offenders, and ought to be treated with a greater degree of sharpness, with too much lenity, as though it were only a sin of infirmity, by which means they are more hardened in the commission of it. This was Eli's fault in dealing with his sons, when he said unto them, *Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people: Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to transgress*, 1 Sam. ii. 23, 24. Whereas, he ought to have restrained them

by those acts of severity, which the nature of the crime demanded.

[2.] Satan often prevents the reproof from taking effect, by inclining the reprover to use indecent behaviour in expressing the haughtiness of his temper, as though there were no respect due to superiors, as such, because they are worthy of reproof; or else by expressing a kind of hatred against the person that committed the sin; whereas, hatred ought to be principally directed against the crime itself, while we convince those whom we are reproofing, that it is love to them, as well as zeal for the glory of God that moves us to do this.

[3.] Satan often hinders reproofs from taking effect, either by tempting those who give them to commit the same sin, or, at least, by persuading those against whom they are directed, that there are other sins equally great, which they are chargeable with, and therefore they ought to look to themselves, rather than take notice of what is done by others.

(2.) Satan hinders the work of conviction, by endeavouring to suppress the preaching of the word, or prevent the success thereof when preached. As to the preaching of the word, this is God's ordinary way by which he convinces of sin; and Satan sometimes stirs up those that are under his power and influence to persecute or suppress the preaching of the gospel. Thus the apostles were *commanded* by the Jews, *not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus*, Acts iv. 18. and when they refused to obey this command, they *put them in prison*, chap. v. 18. This method has been taken, in all ages, by Satan's instigation, with a design to hinder the spreading of Christ's interest in this world, which, by the blessing of providence, has been, notwithstanding, continued unto this day. Therefore, there are other methods which he uses to hinder the success of the word. Sometimes he does this by perverting them that preach it; so that they endeavour to corrupt the word of God, whereby the minds of men are turned away from that simplicity that is in Christ; at other times he tempts them to be very sparing in reproofing sin, or to do this in a more general way, as though their only design was to let their hearers know that there are some sinners in the world, and not that they should be brought under conviction of sin themselves. This is done sometimes in compliance with the corruptions of those whom they do not care to disoblige hereby; and others shun to declare some of the most important truths of the gospel, and affect such a method of preaching as has not a tendency to bring that real advantage to the souls of men, as when it is delivered with more zeal and faithfulness.

Moreover, Satan endeavours to hinder the success of the word, by stirring up the corruptions of those that attend upon

it; for which reason he is represented, by our Saviour, in the parable of the *seed which fell by the way-side*, which the *fowls came and devoured*, as catching away the word, Matt. xiii. 4, 19. By this means they are not much affected with it, nor endeavour to retain it in their memories; and, sometimes he injects vain thoughts under the word preached. This our Saviour compares, in the parable but now mentioned, to the *seed that fell among thorns*; and explains it of *the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choking the word*, ver. 7, 22. And sometimes he endeavours to raise prejudices in the minds of men, against what is delivered; so that the plainness of expression, when addressed to the consciences of men, in such a way, as that it has a tendency to bring them under conviction, is contemned, and called a low, mean way of address, and disliked, because it is not delivered with that elegance of style, or ingenious turn of thought, that is adapted rather to please the ear, than affect the hearts of those that hear it. By those methods Satan endeavours to hinder persons from being brought under conviction: But if their consciences are, notwithstanding this, awakened under the word, or, by some providences which God often makes use of for that end; then there are methods of another kind, which Satan uses, to prevent convictions from making any deep or lasting impression on them. As,

[1.] By endeavouring to make the soul easy, from the consideration of the universal depravity of human nature; and accordingly he insinuates, that all have reason to accuse themselves of sins that would tend to their disquietude, if they made so narrow a search into their hearts as these do, or had such formidable thoughts of the consequences thereof as they have. Here he produces many examples of those who have been quiet and easy in their own minds, though they had as much ground to perplex and torment themselves with such-like melancholy thoughts as they have; yet they go on in a course of sin, without any checks of conscience, and, as Job speaks, *spend their days in wealth*, or, as it is in the margin, in mirth, *and in a moment go down to the grave*, Job vii. 22. being resolved to give way to nothing that shall disturb their peace, or render their lives uncomfortable.

[2.] If this stratagem will not take effect, inasmuch as they are sensible, that while they remain in an unconverted state, they can have no solid foundation for peace, then he endeavours to persuade them, *that the work of conversion is over, and that conviction of sin, though destitute of faith, is true repentance*, or that a partial reformation, and abstaining from some gross and scandalous sins, or engaging in the external duties of religion, especially with some degree of raised affect-

tions therein, is a sufficient ground for them to conclude, that they are in a state of grace ; and if they resolve to go on in this way, he puts them upon depending and relying on their own righteousness, and expecting to be justified thereby, without seeing a necessity of laying hold on what Christ has done and suffered, in order to the removing the guilt of sin ; and, so long as they continue in this way, they shall meet with no disturbance from Satan, this not being the method which God has prescribed for our attaining justification, or that peace which flows from it.

[3.] He puts them *upon making vows and resolutions in their own strength*, that they will perform several religious duties with the greatest exactness, and abstain from those sins which he is sensible they will commit, if not prevented by the grace of God, that so, by too great confidence in their own strength, they may provoke him to leave them to themselves ; and, as the consequence thereof, they soon break their resolutions, and bring themselves under greater perplexities than they were in before : And, then to make them easy, he endeavours to persuade them, that God does not require them to lead so strict a life as they seemed determined to do, but has allowed them some innocent liberties, as he calls them, in giving way to those sins which their condition in life renders necessary ; and, as he had before tempted them to rely on their own strength, now he tempts them to carnal security, and a slothful, stupid frame of spirit, whereby they will be rendered more receptive of those temptations he has to offer, to turn them aside from that strictness in religion, which they before resolved to maintain.

[4.] Satan dazzles *their eyes with the glittering vanities of this world*, that he might divert their minds from serious thoughts about, or any concern for a better ; and if their secular callings are attended with some incumbrances, through the multiplicity of business, or the constant care they are obliged to take to live in the world ; then he alleges the inconsistency hereof, with their giving way to those convictions of sin which will be an hindrance to the necessary business of life. Thus concerning the method which Satan uses to prevent conviction of sin, or to hinder the efficacy thereof : But inasmuch as this does not always take effect ; especially when convictions make a deep impression upon us. We proceed to consider,

3. Those methods that are used by Satan, to hinder persons from closing with Christ, and believing in him. And this he does,

1st, By endeavouring to *keep them in ignorance of the great doctrines of the gospel* ; and, as the consequence thereof, turn-



ing them aside to embrace those errors, which are inconsistent with faith in Christ; and in order thereto, he suggests, that it does not belong to them, to press after the knowledge of the sense of scripture, but to persons of learning, or those who are called to preach or defend the truth; and that it is enough for them to have some general notions of the doctrines of religion, whereby they may be induced to practise those moral virtues which their station in life engages them to, and to leave the more abstruse parts thereof, to those whose inclination leads them thereunto.

Moreover, he improves the different sentiments of men about the doctrines of the gospel, to answer this end, and infers from thence, that since one asserts one thing for truth, and another the contrary, that therefore there is nothing certain in religion; so that they are safest who keep clear of all these controverted matters; and among them he includes the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ. This method of temptation leads men to scepticism, and, if complied with, is inconsistent with faith in Christ; and the consequence hereof is, their imbibing those doctrines that tend to sap the very foundation of revealed religion. And if they pretend to adhere to any scheme of doctrine, it is generally such an one, as has a tendency to strike at the divinity and glory of Christ, the necessity of his satisfaction, or of our justification, by his imputed righteousness, or denying the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and the need we have of his powerful operations in the work of regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. These are the doctrines on which our faith is built; therefore, to deny them, is not only inconsistent with our closing with Christ, as being the result of the alienation of our minds from God; but it is agreeable to the working of Satan in the children of disobedience, whereby he answers his character, as a deceiver, as well as a tempter.

2dly, Satan endeavours to hinder men from believing in Christ, by *persuading them to hope for salvation from the mercy of God*, without any regard to the display of this attribute in Christ, as our Mediator, or faith in him, without which we have no ground to conclude, that we shall obtain mercy from him: Or, since faith is necessary to salvation, he persuades them to take up with such a kind of faith as consists only in a general assent to some things contained in scripture, without the exercise of other graces that are inseparably connected with, and flow from it; and if they have no other notion of saving faith than this, it is no wonder that Satan, by his false reasoning, carries on the temptation yet farther, and persuades them, that this is in their own power, and that it is an easy matter to believe, which is a certain indication that they are destitute of saving faith. Thus we have considered Satan as

endeavouring to strengthen the habits of sin, hinder the work of conviction, or prevent its taking effect; and using methods to keep those who are under convictions, from closing with Christ by faith. We now proceed to consider,

4. His injecting atheistical and blasphemous thoughts into the minds of men, and using his utmost endeavours to despair.

(1.) He sometimes *injects atheistical and blasphemous thoughts into the minds of men*. His nature inclines him to hate and oppose God; and his malice breaks forth in tempting men to blaspheme his perfections: Thus some are represented as *opening their mouths in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven*, Rev. xiii. 6. which they do by the instigation of Satan: However, there is a vast difference between those blasphemous thoughts, which are injected into the minds of wicked men, and those which are oftentimes complained of by the believer. In the former, the Devil enstamps his own image upon them, and they are like a spark falling into combustible matter, which immediately sets it on fire: The latter is like a flash of fire that lights upon water, without doing any execution. We read of some who are entirely under his dominion, who *blaspheme the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds*, chap. xvi. 11. But there are others into whom he injects such-like thoughts, which are a grief and burden to them. Some are tempted to deny the being or providence of God; and others to have unworthy and injurious thoughts of the divine perfections; which cannot be reckoned any other than blasphemy, and, so far as they proceed from us, bring with them a very great degree of guilt. That believers themselves have been sometimes guilty hereof, appears from what the Psalmist utters in words, when he says, *Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious*, Psal. lxxvii. 8, 9. And, indeed, it is no uncommon thing for believers to complain of their having such injurious and unworthy thoughts of the divine perfections, that they dare not utter in words; which fills them with the greatest uneasiness; Therefore it is necessary for us to enquire, when these blasphemous suggestions take their rise from ourselves, and when from Satan?

It is certain, that sometimes they proceed from ourselves: Thus our Saviour says, *Out of the heart proceed blasphemies that defile a man*, Matt. xv. 19. and we have reason to charge ourselves therewith, when they arise from, or are accompanied with other presumptuous sins; or when we do not strive against, but rather give way to them, and other suggestions

of Satan, which tends to God's dishonour, grieves the Holy Spirit, and defiles our own consciences.

But, on the other hand, we may humbly hope and trust, that they are rather to be charged on Satan than ourselves, when they are the result of some bodily distemper, as in those that are under the prevailing power of melancholy, in whom it may be observed, that when by the use of natural means, the distemper is abated, and the constitution mended, these blasphemous suggestions cease. Moreover, when our souls tremble at the temptation, and oppose it with the utmost abhorrence, as our Saviour did, when the Devil tempted him to *fall down and worship him*; to whom he immediately replies, *Get thee hence, Satan*, chap. iv. 9, 10. Again, when we confess, and can appeal to the heart-searching God, that we are so far from having any inclination to comply with the suggestion, that nothing is more grievous to us, than to be assaulted with it: and especially when we take occasion from hence, to exercise that reverential fear of the divine Majesty, that is opposite thereunto.

(2.) As Satan gives disturbance by blasphemous suggestions, so he uses endeavours to *drive persons to despair*. We observed, under a foregoing head, that so long as he can persuade any one to take up with a false peace, and fancy himself secure though going on in a course of rebellion against God, he gives him but little uneasiness, endeavouring rather to increase his stupidity, than awaken his fears. Before this, he attempted to bring ruin upon him, by suggesting those temptations that led to presumption, and pretended to him, that all things were well, when the ground was sinking under him, and his hope built on a sandy foundation: But, when the frame of his spirit is somewhat altered, and he is brought to a sense of his miserable condition; so that none of those stupifying medicines that have been used, will heal the wound; then Satan endeavours to persuade him, that his condition is hopeless, or that there is no help for him in God. This temptation believers, as well as the unregenerate, are sometimes liable to; of which, we have many instances in scripture, besides those that are matter of daily experience. But it may be observed, that there is this difference between the one and the other, in that we scarce ever read of a believer's despair; but we have, at the same time, something added, which either argues his faith in God, or, that there was a mixture of hope, which was like a beam of light shining in darkness: Thus the Psalmist, in Psal. lxxxviii. expresses himself like one in the depths of despair; yet it may be observed, that he addresses himself to God, in ver. 1. as *the Lord God of his salvation*. And when the church is represented in Lam. iii. 18. as

saying, *My hope is perished from the Lord*; it is considered afterwards as encouraging itself in him, as in ver. 24. *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him*; and, in ver. 31. *For the Lord will not cast off for ever*. But when unbelievers are tempted to despair, it is attended with an obstinate resolution to go on in a course of sin, and a total withdrawing themselves from the ordinances, or instituted means of grace. Thus when Cain complains that his *punishment was greater than he could bear*; it is said concerning him, that *he went out from the presence of the Lord*, Gen. iv. 13, 16. In this case despair, especially if it does not proceed from a bodily distemper, as it sometimes does, is a sad mark of a person's being under the dominion of Satan, who was before a tempter, but now proves a tormentor to him.

Here we may take occasion to consider how Satan proceeds against men in tempting them to despair.

1st. He takes the *fittest opportunity*, when we are most like to be overcome by his temptation; *he observes our constitution when most addicted to melancholy*, and therefore more easily led to despair: He also takes notice of some circumstances of providence that we are brought under, which are more than ordinarily afflictive, and tend to deject and render us more receptive of this temptation, in which he endeavours to add weight to our burden, and depress our spirits under it: He also lays hold on those times, more especially *when we are under divine desertion*; and, as the consequence hereof, our faith is weak, and very much indisposed to seek help from God. Moreover, he often takes occasion, *from some great fall and miscarriage* which we have been guilty of, whereby we have grieved the Holy Spirit, and wounded our own consciences, to aggravate our crime, so far that from hence we may conclude our state to be altogether hopeless.

2dly, He endeavours to *stop all the springs of comfort*, that might fortify us against, or afford us any relief under this temptation; and accordingly he turns our thoughts from the promises of the covenant of grace, and persuades the soul to conclude that they are not made to himself; therefore he ought not to apply them to himself for his comfort; and to determine peremptorily against himself, that he is not elected to salvation; not from any marks of reprobation that he finds in himself, but by entering into God's secret counsels, and pretending to search the records of heaven, which he has no warrant to look into, (in which respect despair contains in it a mixture of sinful presumption,) and, at the same time, he has a secret aversion to converse with those who are able to speak a word in season to him; and if any endeavours are used to convince him that the *mercy of God is infinite*, his thoughts

are not as our thoughts, and that the merit of Christ extends itself to the chief of sinners, it is all to no purpose, for his general reply, to this and all other arguments of the like nature, is that this belongs not to him, or his iniquities have excluded him from the divine favour.

3dly, Satan endeavours to *hinder a soul at this time, from waiting on God in ordinances*. As for the Lord's supper, he not only dissuades him from attending on it, but endeavours to insinuate, that, in partaking of it in times past, he has *eat and drunk his own damnation*, giving a perverse sense of that scripture, 1 Cor. xi. 29. which, as appears from the context, is not to be applied to weak believers, but to such as engage in this ordinance, in a profane and irreverent manner, as though it were not a divine institution, and without any desire of obtaining spiritual mercies from God therein; and the word which we render *damnation*, ought to be rendered *judgment*, denoting that they expose themselves to temporal, as well as spiritual judgments in this world for this wickedness; not that they are from hence to conclude, that their eternal damnation will unavoidably ensue hereupon: And therefore the design of this scripture, is to lead to repentance, and not to despair. As for the word preached, he concludes, that every thing which is delivered therein, contains an indictment against him, and there he cannot endure to hear it: And, as for prayer, Satan discourages him from it, by pretending that he is not in a right frame for the performance of this duty, and by giving a false sense of such scriptures as these, in Prov. xxviii. 9. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination*; and, in chap. xxi. 27. *The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination*; the meaning of which is, not that the duty itself is sinful because performed by sinners, or that God hates them the more for praying, but that he hates the hypocrisy, formality, and other sins committed by them, when engaged in this duty; so that they should rather strive and pray against this unbecoming frame of spirit, than lay aside the duty itself, as they are tempted to do.

4thly, Satan also makes use of false reasoning, by which he endeavours to answer this end; as,

[1.] He puts them upon concluding, that *because they have no grace, therefore they never shall have it*; which method of reasoning, if it were just, must be applied to all unregenerate sinners; and then we must conclude, that the whole work of conversion in this world, is at an end; which, blessed be God, it is not.

[2.] He farther argues, that because they have lived a great while in a *course of sin*, and their hearts are *very much hardened thereby*; therefore they cannot be broken, or their wound is

incurable, and there are no healing medicines ; which is to set limits to the almighty power and grace of God.

[3.] Satan farther induces them to conclude, that there is something uncommon in their case, that they are greater sinners than ever obtained mercy, which is more than it is possible for them to know ; however, they are tempted to apply this presumptuous and discouraging suggestion to themselves to heighten their despair, and hinder the force of any argument that may be brought to the contrary.

[4.] The most common argument which Satan uses to induce persons to despair, is, that they have sinned against light, and the convictions of their own consciences, grieved and quenched the Spirit of God ; and therefore they are inclined to think that they have committed the unpardonable sin. This is often alleged by persons against themselves ; though, at the same time, they know not what that sin is, and regard not any thing that is said to convince them, that they have committed it ; and, indeed, their very fears that they have, and the desires they express that it were otherwise with them, are an undeniable argument that they are mistaken in the judgment which they pass on themselves, by adhering to Satan's suggestions, leading them to despair \*. Thus we have given some account of the great variety of temptations which we are exposed to from the world, the flesh and the Devil. We are now to consider,

*Secondly,* How we are to pray, that we may not be led into temptation ; or, if we are, by what means we may be delivered from the evil consequences that will arise from our compliance therewith. An hour of temptation is not only afflictive, but dangerous, by reason of the united assaults of those enemies that we have to deal with. The world continually presents objects that are agreeable to corrupt nature ; and Satan is unwearied in his endeavours, to turn us aside from God thereby, that he may have us in his own power, and drive us from one degree of impiety to another : Therefore, though it is not impossible to be tempted without sin, yet it is exceeding difficult ; and therefore, as we are to take heed, that we do not go in the way of temptation ; so we are to address ourselves to God, that he would keep us from it, if it be his will.

We are not, indeed, absolutely to pray against it, as we are to pray against sin, which it is not possible for us to commit, without contracting guilt ; whereas we may be tempted to sin, and yet come off conquerors over it : But, since

\* See a particular account what this sin is ; and when a person may certainly conclude that he has not committed it, ante page 318 to 320.



the enterprize itself is hazardous, the conflict difficult, and the event, with respect to us, uncertain, we should rather desire, that, if God has not some gracious ends to answer thereby, which are, at present, unknown to us; he would be pleased to prevent it. The case is the same as though we were apprehensive of an infectious distemper raging amongst us, which we are to pray against; though God could, by his power, preserve us, in particular, from the ill consequences thereof; or, if we were informed, that an enemy laid wait secretly for our lives, it is possible for God to deliver us out of his hand; yet if the matter were referred to our own choice, we would rather desire that he may not be suffered to assault us. Thus we are to pray, that God would keep us from temptation; though we are not, at the same time, to question his power, or distrust his providence, as though he could not carry us safely through it; which we are to hope that he will do, if he suffers us to be tempted. Neither are we to suppose, that we can be altogether free from those temptations that arise from the imperfection of this present state, in which we must expect to be subject to the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit: Therefore we are principally to direct our prayers to God, that he would keep us from falling by the temptation, or else, that he would recover us, when fallen, prevent the evils, that would otherwise ensue, and over-rule our sinful compliance therewith, to his own glory, and our future advantage.

1. We are to pray, that he would keep us from falling by the temptation, that it may be like a wave dashing against a rock, which remains unmoved thereby, or like a dart shot against a breast-plate of steel, which only blunts the point thereof, and returns it back without doing any execution. Now God prevents our falling by temptation, either by his restraining or renewing grace: The former of these is common to the regenerate and the unregenerate; and where there is nothing more than this, it chiefly consists in some alteration made in the natural temper, or present inclinations of men, whereby sin, though it remains unmortified, is, nevertheless abstained from, like a river that is kept from overflowing a country, not by ceasing to be fluid in its own nature, but by being contained within its proper banks. These restraints, in some, proceed from that change which providence makes in their outward condition or circumstances in the world; so that those temptations, which, before this, they were so ready to comply with, are either discontinued, or offered without success; as when a person is bowed down with some affliction, that it gives a different turn to his passions, whereby, as Job speaks, the *heart is made soft*, Job xxiii. 16. in a natural way, by those

troubles that tend to depress the spirits. Sometimes he is unexpectedly surprized with a fit of sickness, which gives him a near view of death and another world, and then the violence of the temptation, for the present, ceases, or at least, he is deterred from complying with it; and it may be, his spirits are decayed, his constitution weakened, and his natural vigour abated hereby, so that he has no inclination to commit some sins which he was formerly addicted to. Others want leisure to pursue those lusts which they are habitually prone to, being engaged in a hurry of business, or conflicting with many difficulties for the subsisting of themselves and families: These are not exposed to those temptations that often attend a slothful and indolent way of living: Or it may be, they are separated from their former associates, who have been partners with them in sin, and tempters to it. And sometimes there is a sudden thought injected into their minds, which fills them with an inward fear and dread of the consequence of committing those sins which are more gross and notorious. This is the result of an awakened conscience; whereby persons are kept from the commission of many sins, by the restraints of common providence, though they are, notwithstanding, in a state of unregeneracy, and sin in general remains unmortified.

But, on the other hand, the believer is preserved from it by the power of sanctifying grace, whereby an habitual inclination is wrought in him, to detest the sin that he is tempted to; and the Spirit of God, by his immediate interposure, internally disposes him to exercise the contrary graces; which proceed from a principle of filial fear and love to God, together with a sense of gratitude for all the benefits that he has received from him; so that in repelling a temptation, he says, with Joseph, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God*, Gen. xxxix. 9.

2. We are also to pray, that God would prevent those evil consequences, which very often attend such-like temptations; that our hearts may not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, that we may not willingly yield ourselves bond-slaves to Satan, or take pleasure in those sins which we have been tempted to commit: and that we may not be exposed hereby to divine desertion, how much soever we have deserved it.

3. We are likewise to pray, that God would recover, or bring us out of the pit, into which we are fallen, that hereby Satan may not take occasion, after he has overcome, to insult us, that we may not be given to a perpetual backsliding; but that our souls may be *restored*, and we *led in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake*, Psal. xxiii. 3.

4. If we have fallen by a temptation we are farther to pray, that God would over-rule it to his own glory, and our spiritual advantage. Though there be nothing good in sin, yet God can bring good out of it; and this he does when he humbles the soul for it, and makes him afraid of going near the brink of the pit, into which he fell, inclines him to be more watchful, that, by indulging some sins, he may not lay himself open to those temptations that would lead him to the commission of many others. This will also induce him to depend on Christ by faith, as being sensible of his inability to resist the least temptation without him. And it will excite in him the greatest thankfulness to God, who has found a way for his escape out of the snare wherein he was entangled, by which means he will receive abundant advantage, and God will be greatly glorified.

Thus we have considered God's people as exposed to various temptations, and how they are to direct their prayers to him, agreeably thereunto, pursuant to what our Saviour has taught us in this petition; which, that we may farther enlarge upon in our meditations, we may express ourselves to God in prayer to this purpose; "We draw nigh to thee, O our God and  
" Father, as those who are exposed to many difficulties, by  
" reason of the snares and temptations that attend us. We find  
" it hard to pass through the world without being allured and  
" drawn aside from thee, by the vanities thereof, or discour-  
" aged and made uneasy by those afflictions which are inse-  
" parable from this present state: But that which gives us the  
" greatest ground of distress and trouble, and makes us an  
" easy prey to our spiritual enemies, is, the deceitfulness and  
" treachery of our own hearts, whereby we are prone to yield  
" ourselves the servants of sin and Satan. Every age and con-  
" dition of life has been filled with temptations, which we  
" have been very often overcome by. We therefore implore  
" the powerful aids of thy grace, that we may be kept in the  
" hour of temptation. Enable us to overcome the world, to  
" mortify and subdue our corrupt inclinations, and to stand  
" against all the wiles and fiery darts of the Devil. Let us  
" not be tempted to presume of being happy without holiness,  
" or enjoying the benefits that are purchased by Christ, with-  
" out faith in him. May we also be freed from all unbecom-  
" ing thoughts of thy divine perfections, and not give way to  
" any temptations that may lead us to despair of thy mercy,  
" which thou art pleased to extend to the chief of sinners.  
" We farther beg, though with submission to thy will, that we  
" may be kept from the temptations of our grand adversary,  
" because we are sensible of our own weakness and inability to  
" resist him; nevertheless, we are confident that we can do all

“ things by thine assistance : Therefore, if thou sufferest us to  
 “ be tempted, appear in our behalf at that time, that we may  
 “ be made more than conquerors ; and when we fall by temp-  
 “ tation, let us not be utterly cast down, but upheld with thine  
 “ hand, and let thy strength be made perfect in our weakness ;  
 “ and, in the end, bring us safely to that happy state, where  
 “ there is neither sin nor temptation ; when we shall be deli-  
 “ vered from all the evils of this present state, that thou mayest  
 “ have the glory, and we may praise thee throughout the ages  
 “ of eternity.”

QUEST. CXCVI. *What doth the conclusion of the Lord's prayer teach us ?*

ANSW. The conclusion of the Lord's prayer, [which is, *For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever, Amen*] teacheth us to enforce our petitions with arguments, which are to be taken, not from any worthiness in ourselves, or in any other creature, but from God ; and with our prayers, to join praises, ascribing to God alone eternal sovereignty, omnipotency, and glorious excellency ; in regard whereof, as he is able and willing to help us, so we, by faith, are emboldened to plead with him that he would, and quietly to rely upon him that he will fulfil our requests, and to testify this our desire, and assurance, we say, *Amen*.

**A**S we are taught to begin our prayers with those expressions of reverence, becoming the Majesty of God, when we draw nigh to him ; so we are to conclude them with a doxology, or an ascription of that glory which is due to his name ; whereby praise is joined with prayer, and we encouraged to hope, that he will hear and answer our petitions.

In the conclusion of the Lord's prayer, we are directed to ascribe to God *the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever* ; and to sum up all with that comprehensive word, *Amen*. This may be considered in two respects,

1. As we hereby express the due regard we have to the divine perfections : And,

2. As we improve or make use of them as so many arguments or pleas in prayer.

1. We shall consider this doxology as containing the sense we have of the divine perfections. Accordingly,

(1.) We say, *Thine is the kingdom* ; whereby his sovereignty and universal dominion over all creatures, is acknowledged as he has a right to every thing that he gave being to : And, as this is more especially a branch of his relative glory, since

the idea of a king connotes subjects, over whom his dominion is exercised; so it supposes in us an humble expression of subjection to him, and dependence on him for all things that we enjoy or hope for. We also consider him as having a right to make use of all creatures at his pleasure; inasmuch as the earth is his, and the fulness thereof: And, as we are intelligent creatures, we profess our obligation to yield obedience to his revealed will, and are afraid of incurring his displeasure by rebelling against him, with whom is terrible Majesty: And when we take a view of him; as seated on a throne of grace, and his government as extended to his church, upon which account he is adored as *king of saints*, Rev. xv. 3. we hope for his safe protection and for all the blessings which he bestows on those whom he governs in a way subservient to their everlasting salvation.

(2.) We adore him as a God of infinite power, *Thine is the power*. Dominion without power will not be sufficient to maintain its rights; therefore, since God is described as having the kingdom belonging to him, or being the governor among the nations; his attribute of power ought next to be considered, whereby he can, without the least difficulty, secure the welfare and happiness of his subjects, and bring to nought the designs of his enemies; or, as it is elegantly expressed, *look on every one that is proud, and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place, hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret*, Job xl. 12, 13.

(3.) It is farther added, *Thine is the glory*. This may be taken in two senses; either as including in it all his perfections, whereby he is rendered glorious in the eyes of angels and men; so that there is nothing that we esteem beautiful or excellent in the whole system of created beings, but what is deformed, and, as it were, vanishes and sinks into nothing, when compared with him: Or else, the meaning of the expression is, that all the praise and honour that arises from every thing that is done in the world, which appears great and excellent, or has a tendency to raise our esteem and admiration, is to be ascribed to him; whereby we disclaim the least shadow or appearance of divine honour, which we are ready, upon all occasions to acknowledge to be due to him alone: Thus we adore him as having all divine perfections, when we say, *Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory*.

And it is farther added, that they belong to him *for ever and ever*; whereby it is intimated, that whatever changes there may be in the nature or condition of created beings, he is unchangeably the same, and therefore will remain glorious in himself, and be for ever admired and adored by all his saints, whose happiness depends upon it.

2 We shall consider these divine perfections, as they afford us so many arguments, or pleas, in prayer, from whence we take encouragement to expect a gracious answer from him, as appears from that *illative* particle, FOR, which is prefixed to this doxology. Therefore we may consider it as subjoined to the foregoing petitions, as the strongest motive to induce us to hope, that the blessings we pray for, shall be granted us; accordingly we disclaim all worthiness in ourselves, and desire that our name or righteousness should not be mentioned; but that the whole revenue of glory may redound to God, as all our expectation is from him. We might here apply the several arguments or pleas contained herein, to every one of the foregoing petitions; which would tend very much to enforce them, and afford matter for our farther enlargement in prayer: But I shall rather chuse to reduce the subject-matter thereof to the two general heads, under which they are contained; and accordingly to shew how we may make use of those arguments that are taken from the kingdom, power, and glory, belonging to God, for ever and ever, in our praying for those things that concern his glory, agreeably to what we are directed to ask for in the three first petitions; or our temporal or spiritual advantage, as in the three last.

(1.) As to what respects the glory of God in the world, *viz.* that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom advanced, and his will be done: Therein we pray, that, as he is a great King, the blessed and only Potentate, the Governor of the world and the church, he would sanctify his glorious name; that his interest may be maintained, and prevail against every thing that opposes it, that he would take to himself his great power and reign; and, since the success of the gospel, and the advancement of his kingdom of grace, is a work surpassing finite power, and there are many endeavours used to weaken and overthrow it; we trust, we hope, we plead with him, for the glory of his name, that he would give a check to, and defeat the designs of his and our enemies, that the enlargement of his kingdom may not be obstructed, nor his subjects disheartened, whilst Satan's kingdom, that is set in opposition to it, makes such sensible advances, and prevails so much against it.

And, that his name may be sanctified by his people, and his kingdom advanced in this lower world; we farther pray, that his subjects may be inclined to obey, and submit to his will in all things; or, that it may be done on earth as it is in heaven: Therefore, when we ascribe the kingdom, power, and glory to him, we do, in effect, say, " Lord, what would be-  
" come of this wretched world, if it were not under thy gra-  
" cious government, which is its glory and defence? Thou  
" sittest on the throne of thy holiness, which thou hast esta-



" blished of old: Therefore, we are encouraged to hope, that  
 " thou wilt not forsake thy people, who are called by thy name,  
 " nor suffer thine interest to be trampled on, nor thy name  
 " profaned by those who say, Who is the Lord, that we should  
 " obey him? Thine arm is not shortened, that thou canst not  
 " save, since thine is the power; and therefore nothing is too  
 " hard for thee. Thou hast given us ground to expect, that  
 " thou wilt shew thy people marvellous things; and thou hast  
 " promised, that all nations shall bow down before thee and  
 " serve thee; and that the kingdoms of this world shall become  
 " the kingdoms of Christ: This thou canst easily accomplish  
 " by thine almighty power, though it be too hard for man.—  
 " Thou art never at a loss for instruments to fulfil thy plea-  
 " sure; for all things are in thy hand: Neither, indeed, dost  
 " thou need them; for, by thy powerful word, thou canst cause  
 " light to shine out of darkness, and revive thy work in the  
 " midst of the years, that thy people may rejoice and be glad  
 " in thy salvation. Take the work, therefore, into thine own  
 " hand, and, thereby, give us occasion to admire and ascribe  
 " to thee the glory that is due to thy name."

(2.) We are to consider, how we may plead for temporal  
 or spiritual blessings, as making use of this argument, that the  
 kingdom, power, and glory, belong to God; accordingly, we  
 pray, that he would give us that portion of the good things  
 of life, that he sees necessary for us, and that we may enjoy his  
 blessing with it, in order to our being prepared for a better,  
*q. d.* " Give us daily bread; for the earth is thine, and the  
 " fulness thereof: Thou hast subdued us to thyself, and hast  
 " told us, that thou wilt surely do us good, and bring us, at  
 " last, to thy heavenly kingdom: Therefore we humbly wait  
 " upon thee, that we may not be suffered to faint by the way,  
 " or be destitute of those blessings that are needful for us in  
 " our present condition. Thou art able to supply all our wants:  
 " We have hitherto been upheld by thy power, and thou hast  
 " sometimes done great things for us, that we looked not for,  
 " and hast been our refuge and strength, a very present help  
 " in every time of trouble. Thou hast granted us life and  
 " favour, and thy visitations have preserved our spirits; what  
 " thou hast given us we have gathered; thou hast opened thy  
 " hand, and filled us with good. And, as the treasures of thy  
 " bounty are not exhausted, nor thy power diminished; so we  
 " desire to exercise a constant dependence on thee, and to  
 " hope in thy mercy; that, as thou hast given us those better  
 " things that accompany salvation, thou wilt also bestow upon  
 " us what thou seest needful for us in our way to it; which  
 " will not only redound to our comfort, but thy glory; who  
 " givest food to all flesh; for thy mercy endureth for ever."

As for these spiritual blessings that we stand in need of, we encourage ourselves to hope for them; and accordingly, when we pray for forgiveness of sin, we consider God as sitting upon a throne of grace, and inviting us to come and receive a pardon from his hand: Therefore we say, "Lord, thou art ready to forgive, and thereby to lay eternal obligations on thy subjects, to love and fear thee; if thou shouldst resolve to display thy vindictive justice in punishing sin, according to the demerit thereof, thy kingdom of grace would be at an end; but thou encouragest us to hope for forgiveness, that hereby grace may reign through righteousness unto life eternal. And, as thou art a God of infinite power, we beg that thou wouldst thereby work in us those graces that flow from, and are the evidences of our having obtained forgiveness, that being delivered from the guilt of sin, we may walk before thee in newness of life. We also ask this privilege, as what thou bestowest for Christ's sake, that hereby he may be glorified as the purchaser of this blessing, and we laid under the highest obligations to love him, as being constrained hereunto by his love, expressed to us in washing us from our sins in his own blood."

When we pray to be kept from temptation, or recovered; when fallen by it, we consider ourselves as the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and his enemies as endeavouring to draw us aside from our allegiance to him; and, as dreading the consequence thereof, we address ourselves to him, to secure us from the danger we are exposed to from them; and accordingly, when we say, *Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory*, we are furnished with arguments adapted to our present exigencies, &c. &c. "The power of our spiritual enemies is great, and much more formidable, because of the treachery of our own hearts; yet we are encouraged to implore thine assistance against them, O our God and King, that we may be kept in the hour of temptation; inasmuch as all the attempts that are made against us, carry in them an invasion on thy sovereignty and dominion over us. We desire always to commit ourselves to thy protection, and hope to find it, since there are no snares laid for us, but thou art able to detect and prevent our being entangled by them, and also canst bruise our enemies under our feet, and, if we are at any time overcome by them, recover us from the paths of the destroyer: Do this for us, we beseech thee, that thou mayest have all the glory: We have no might, but our eyes are upon thee, who art able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless, before the presence of thy glory, with exceeding joy."

As for the word, *Amen*, with which our Saviour concludes this prayer, it is of an Hebrew original, and is sometimes prefixed to what is asserted with a vehemency of expression, designed not only to confirm, but to bespeak the utmost attention to what is said, as being a matter of very great importance; in which case it is rendered by the word *verily*. . . And is sometimes repeated to add greater force to it: Thus when our Saviour asserts the necessity of regeneration, he says, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*, John iii. 3. And elsewhere, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, chap. xvi. 23. (a)

It is put in the close of each of the evangelists, as denoting, that whatever is contained therein, is to be depended on, as being of infallible verity; and almost all the epistles are concluded with it, as is also the book of the Revelation, in which it is put after a short prayer or doxology; in which respect it signifies, that what is therein requested of God, is earnestly desired, and the petition summed up, and ratified thereby; or, that the glory which is ascribed, is again acknowledged to belong to him, and we rejoice in the discovery that is made thereof to us.

Again, sometimes the word is not only used, but explained at the same time, as containing a summary account of what we ask for: Thus when Benaiah preferred a petition to David in the behalf of Solomon, and had a grant from him, that he should reign in his stead; it is said, *He answered the king, and said, Amen; the Lord God of my lord the king say so too*, 1 Kings i. 36.

Thus then the word, *Amen*, with which this and other prayers are to be concluded, signifies, *so it is*, *let it be so*, or, *so it shall be*; each of which respective significations are to be applied to the subject-matter of our prayers: As it respects sins confessed, or the glory that we ascribe to God for mercies received, it denotes, *so it is*: As it refers to the promises which we plead and take encouragement from, or the blessings which we desire, it signifies, *so it shall be*, and *so let it be*. Thus it is to be applied in this prayer; and in particular, as it is joined to the doxology, *Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever*, we express our faith herein, together with our adoration of these divine perfections. And there are some prayers or doxologies, in which the glory of Christ and the

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(a) As in John only it is repeated, he wrote it only in the Hebrew character, it is presumed, and understood by it "*the truth*;" the second Amen was exegetical and in the Greek character, for the sake of the unlearned.

gospel-state is described, which are concluded with the repetition of the word : Thus when the Psalmist had been enlarging on this subject, he concludes with, *Blessed be his glorious name for ever ; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen and Amen*, i. e. God has determined that it shall be so, and the whole church is obliged to express their faith, and say, *Amen, so let it be.*

Some have thought it expedient in joint prayer, for the whole assembly, together with him that is the mouth thereof, to say, *Amen*, with a loud voice, and thereby to signify their consent to, and concern in the subject-matter contained therein ; which appears to have been the practice of the church in the early ages thereof ; as Justin Martyr observes it was in his time \* ; and it was afterwards observed in Jerom's time, who compares the sound they made with their united voices to that of thunder † ; which, though it was done with a pious design, and not in the least to be blamed, yet it is not to be insisted on as necessary, since all present professedly join in every part of the prayer, as much as though they repeated the words with an audible voice ; and accordingly it is sufficient for every one, when prayer is publicly concluded with this comprehensive word, to lift up his heart to God, and thereby express the part he bears therein.

As for the contrary extreme, when one, whose office was altogether unknown to the primitive churches, is appointed to say, *Amen*, in the name of the whole congregation ; this is, I think, altogether unwarrantable ; though several Popish commentators defend it from the apostle's words, who speaks of him that *occupieth the room of the unlearned*, as saying, *Amen, at the giving of thanks*, 1 Cor. xiv. 16. where, by the unlearned, we are not to understand the Clerk of a congregation ‡, but one who understands not the subject-matter of that prayer, which the apostle supposes to be put to God in an unknown tongue : All therefore that can be inferred from hence is, that we ought to pray to God with understanding and faith, that hereby we may be able to sum up our requests and glorify him by saying, *Amen*.

\* Vid. Justin Martyr, *Apol. ii. pro Christ.* who intimates, that when public prayer and giving of thanks was ended, the whole congregation testified their approving of it by saying, *Amen* ; *ὡς ὁ ἅμασι λαὸς ἀποφαιμὲν λέγον αμήν.*

† Vid. Hieron. in *Lib. ii. comment. ad Galat. in Procn.* *Ad similitudinem celestis tonitrus reboat, [scil. Ecclesia.] Amen.*

‡ Vid. *Whitby in loc.*



# Theological Questions.

*Many theological instructors teach their pupils successfully, by requiring them, besides the usual course of systematical reading, interrogative examinations, and critical study of the scriptures in the original languages, also to write disquisitions on a number of Questions in Theology. Hereby they are provided with a store of arguments, on the most difficult subjects, and furnished with the mature advices of their preceptors; to which they may recur in any period of after life. To aid in this important work, the following List of Questions has been subjoined to this first American edition of Ridgley; and every instructor, or pupil, will select or vary at his pleasure.*

**QUEST. 1.**—How does it appear, that something has existed from eternity?

2. What evidence is there, that the existence of man is derived, and dependent?

3. How do you prove the existence of God?

4. What is Theology?

5. What is natural Theology?

6. What does it discover of the Divine character?

7. What arguments prove the genuineness, authenticity, and what, the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments?

8. How do you prove the Unity of God?

9. How do you prove the divinity and personality of the Son, and the Holy Ghost?



10. What are the Manichean, Arian, Sabellian, Socinian and Unitarian heresies, and how are they respectively confuted?

11. How do you prove that there are divine purposes, and that these are eternal and immutable?

12. Wherein does the certainty of events, taught in the scriptures, differ from the fatality of heathen philosophers and modern sceptics?

13. How do you prove that the world was created?

14. In what estate was man created?

15. What are the acts of God's providence; or how is it employed about created things?

16. What is the difference between a law and a covenant?

17. How do you prove that God did enter into a Covenant with Adam, which included him and all his posterity?

18. What are we to understand by Adam's freedom of will?

19. What is necessary to constitute a moral agent?

20. What is the difference between natural, and moral, power, and inability?

21. How is the doctrine of universal absolute decrees consistent with the moral agency of man?

22. How do you define sin?





23. Are there venial sins?
24. How do you describe the sin against the Holy Ghost?
25. How do you prove the depravity of unrenewed men to be total?
26. What was implied by the death threatened in case of disobedience?
27. Wherein consists the punishment of the damned?
28. How do you prove the eternity of hell torments?
29. How do you define the Covenant of Grace?
30. Is there any ground for a distinction between the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace?
31. Wherein do the Covenants of Works, and Grace agree, and differ?
32. Are the Law, and Gospel inconsistent with each other?
33. What is an atonement? And what the nature, and extent of the atonement of Christ?
34. Was the sacrifice of Christ Jesus absolutely necessary for our salvation?
35. Whence did the obedience, and sufferings of Christ derive their efficacy?
36. How was his death consistent with the justice of God?

37. How do you describe the nature, mode of administration, extent, duration and glory of Christ's kingly office?
38. What is to be understood by his descent into Hell?
39. What are we to understand by the application of Redemption?
40. How do you prove that the influence of the Holy Spirit is of free and sovereign grace?
41. What is regeneration, or effectual calling?
42. Whence arises the necessity of it?
43. What are the means of grace, and what their use?
44. What is the utmost the unregenerate do in the use of the means of grace?
45. To what are they to be exhorted?
46. Wherein consists the difference of the special call of the Spirit, and the more outward call of the gospel?
47. How do you describe the nature of gospel repentance, with the difference between this, and conviction of sin, or legal repentance?
48. How do you describe the nature, and necessity of justifying faith; and what species of causality has it in our justification?
49. What is included in, and what are the effects of justification?











50. How are full satisfaction and free pardon consistent?
51. What are we to understand by the imputation of Christ's righteousness for justification?
52. What are the absurdities implied in supposing a justifying faith to consist in a sure confidence of the pardon of our sins?
53. Point out the nature, privileges and evidences of adoption.
54. How do you describe, and prove the possibility of attaining an assurance, of God's love?
55. How do you describe the believer's peace of conscience, and point out the difference between it, and the false hope of the hypocrite?
56. How do you prove the doctrine of the saint's perseverance in a state of grace unto eternal life? And explain Ezek. xviii. 24. Heb. vi. 4—6, and the falls of David, Peter, and Judas?
57. Is sinless perfection attainable in this life?
58. What is the condition of the souls of believers immediately after death?
59. How do you prove that there shall be a general resurrection of the just and the unjust?
60. How do you prove there shall be a general judgment?
61. What are the consequences of the judgment to the righteous and the wicked?
62. How do you prove that the institution of the Sabbath, is of perpetual obligation?

63. How do you prove that public worship is to be celebrated on the Sabbath?

64. What is the nature of a Christian church?  
What are its standing officers?  
To whom does the right of ordination belong?

65. What is the nature and import of baptism?  
How do you prove that other modes than immersion are lawful?

66. How do you prove the divine right of infant baptism?

67. What is the nature and use, and who are the proper partakers of the Lord's supper?

68. What errors are implied in a prayer, the object of which is a change of divine purposes?

69. What is the nature, use and necessity of prayer?

70. How do you prove that family-prayer is a duty?

71. Wherein consist the unity and communion that should subsist in the church of Christ, and the benefits or advantages of it?

72. What are the rules and end of church discipline?  
What is the nature and design of excommunication?

73. What are the qualifications necessary to a minister of Christ?

74. In what does the happiness of heaven consist?







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### **PRESBYTERIAL QUESTIONS FOR EXEGESES.**

Vid. Form of Gov. c. xiii. sec. 3.

1. Qui Deus unus dicitur?
2. Quibus testimoniis probas Trinitatem?
3. Cur Christum verum hominem esse oportuit?
4. Quæ argumenta probant scripturam a Deo profectam esse?
5. Qua ratione peccatum originis transmittitur in posteros?
6. Estne peccatum aliquid positivum an privativum?
7. Quid est peccatum in Spiritum Sanctum?
8. An una et eadem ratio salutis consequendæ post lapsum fuit?
9. Quæ sunt causa efficiens fidei, et objectum?
10. Quo sensu fide justificari dicimur?
11. An opera renatorum bona sunt pura, nulloque vitio contaminata?
12. Qua ratione vita æterna dicitur merces?
13. Quandoquidem mortuus est pro omnibus Christus, annon omnium Redemptor?
14. Eruntne damnatorum pænæ perpetuæ?
15. Quæ sunt veræ et internæ ecclesiæ proprietates?
16. Nullumne est discrimen inter episcopum et presbyterum?
17. Quibus est exhibenda corna Domini?
18. Quinam sunt baptizandi?
19. Licetne homini christiano, cum vocatur, magistratum gerere?
20. Quinam ad judicium ecclesiasticum vocandi sunt?

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